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NEA Today

Navigating Religion in the Classroom

We the People

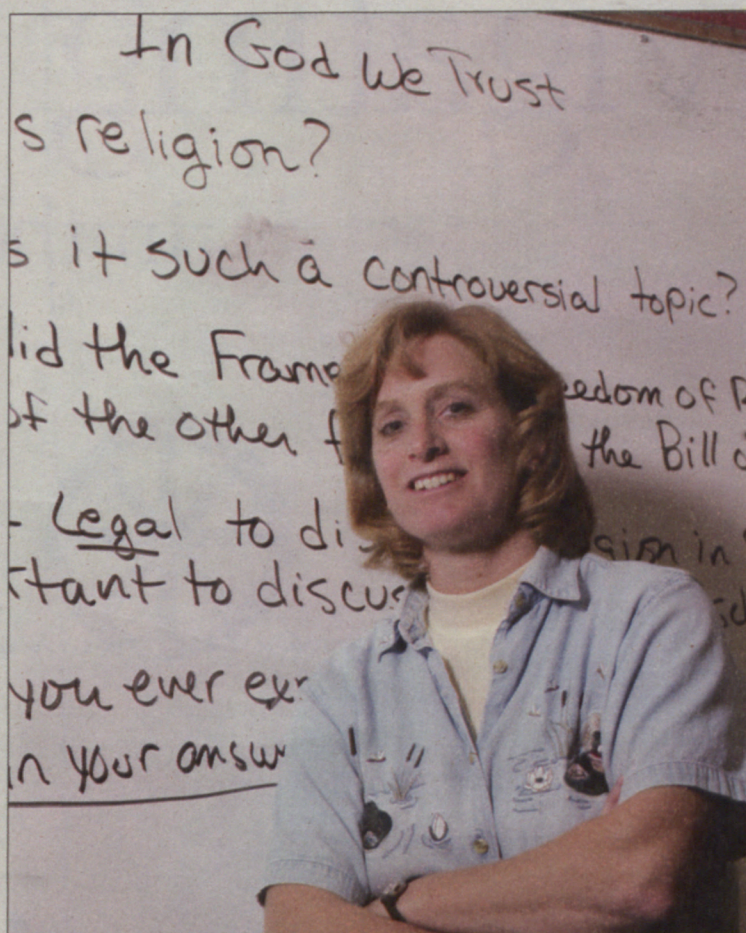
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NEA Today

November 2002

Volume 21 • Number 3

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NEA Today (ISSN 0734-7219) is published eight times a year, monthly, in September, October, November, January, February, March, April, and May by the National Education Association, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036-3290.

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to NEA Today, Attn: NEA Membership Records Address Change, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: 202/822-7065. **Members:** To change address, see Reader Services box to the right.

NEA Today is mailed to all NEA members as a benefit of membership. Nonmember subscription price: \$55 institutional, \$90 domestic and foreign. For members, subscriptions represent \$4.25 of annual dues.

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A LIVING WAGE FOR PARAS IN MISSISSIPPI...

I was extremely proud to read about Sue O'Brien and Mary Lee Grigsby organizing a campaign for a livable wage (ESP, September 2002). I am so glad that someone does realize that we are living on the poverty line as teacher assistants.

Last year, I made less than \$10,000. Think about \$10,000 and three kids to feed. There is just no way that should be legal. I have been working two jobs but that has gotten to be too much. This is my fourth year as an assistant in the Jackson schools, and my monthly salary is \$745.40. I can't continue like this.

Here in Mississippi, the school board has a new requirement for teacher assistants to be "highly qualified." They must have 60 semester hours of college, a two-year degree, or pass a rigorous test. These are new requirements, but nothing has been said about a new salary. It's ridiculous.

I plan to go back to school in January. When I finish, I will leave my home state. You can't survive with the wages in Mississippi.

Carla Lenoir
Jackson, Mississippi

...AND FOR SUBSTITUTES IN MICHIGAN

The article on the Vermont paraeducators (ESP, September 2002) caught my eye. No one, it seems, wants to pay a decent wage to substitute or "guest" teachers, either. Forget raises. Step raises only exist in a handful of districts in my state, and from what I've seen on the Internet, that goes for the rest of the country.

I'm paid now for four years running the exact same wages per day. In Michigan, guest teachers can teach 150 days a year. I've been teaching my max for years at \$72 per day—\$10,800 per year. I know exactly what the woman in the article speaks of when she says paraeducators are working two and three jobs. I've been doing extra for years to support my single-parent household.

As college costs have risen over the last two years, along with housing costs, student loans, and health

Letters

A BEREAVED MEMBER SENDS THANKS

With all my heart I wish to express my deepest thanks for the gracious and thoughtful gift of funds from the NEAFT September 11 Fund.

My brother was at the World Trade Center and his body has not been found. My family was at a loss as to how we would be able to afford the three of us traveling from Oregon to New York City for the Ground Zero Memorial. The receipt of your generous gift was a godsend.

The Red Cross covered our transportation costs, but I was informed that my school district would not consider my three days in New York as "bereavement leave" because it is too long after the event. Your gift therefore will be used to reimburse the district for the cost of the substitute and to pay for the potential loss of three days' salary that I may be charged.

Words can not appropriately express how we feel for this heartfelt expression of sympathy. Thank you all for your kindness and your prayers.

Gerry Iken
The Dalles, Oregon



Matthew Baek

care, the quality of subs has diminished. Educated subs, if we can't secure a professional position, are better off at \$10 to \$11 an hour as clerical support.

For some reason, nobody sees guest teachers as having to pay family bills.

Jeanne Wright
Lansing, Michigan

MY YEAR AS A NOMAD

When I read "My First Year" (September 2002), it brought back much emotion from not so long ago.

I spent my first year in the Los Angeles schools as a substitute. I was excited to sign my first contract to be a special education teacher at an inner-city high school.

When I showed up, I learned I would be in one teacher's room for three periods and in another room for two periods. Okay, I figured, I would make it work.

But I discovered quickly that this instability was not going to work with this special population. With another teacher's help, I arranged to have one room all day. It was approved by the office, hallelujah!

I used all my feng shui training to set up the learning environment and the students loved it. A few weeks later, I was told to move into the old auto shop. I cried.

When we arrived, there were still cars in the air, transmissions and other auto gear everywhere. I refused to be in such a dangerous environment with students who had both respiratory and behavior challenges. Eventually, we were returned to our old room. The students were so happy.

Halfway through the semester, we were informed we would be moving again. At the end of the year, I resigned.

And so, I'm substitute teaching again...

Carma Love
Los Angeles, California

VOUCHER PREDICTION

I retired three months ago after 31 years of teaching. I support the concept of public schools, but my husband and I sent our four children to a parochial school because of our religious beliefs.

Vouchers (Rights Watch, September 2002) will use public money to fund private and parochial schools. Sooner or later, the government will tell those schools that they cannot teach religion classes due to separation of church and state! No more chapel services, no more required daily Bible memory verses, and no more section on the report card labeled "Sunday church attendance by the student and his/her family."

As a parent, I do not want the government telling me what the parochial school can or cannot do! Keep our taxes in public schools.

Mary Foess
Vassar, Michigan

BROKEN HEALTH CARE

In Health Care Fix? (Letters, September 2002), the writer states that as a union we can stand tall on the global stage. When? Today, we are told that we don't need unions, pensions, Social Security, or universal health care. Just invest a few pennies of your Social Security money in the stock market and you will be rich when you retire.

Forty million people have no real access to health care. If you have no health insurance, you must humble yourself to get on a welfare program. Or maybe you can hold a bake sale at the local mall. We are the only industrialized nation without universal health care. Our citizens deserve better.

Raymond Maykovich
Patton, Pennsylvania

DON'T FROWN ON SMILING

All I can say about Pat Morse-McNeely's "Never Smile

Before Thanksgiving" essay (Debate, September 2002) is that it is a good thing she is now retired. If I were a child and walked into a classroom my first day and each day thereafter for the next few months and my teacher never smiled, I would dread coming. That would not make for an environment conducive to learning. Kids today need to see a smiling face when they come to school. Just because a teacher smiles, that does not mean they can not control their classroom. I smile every day to my children and every child I come in contact with. I make jokes with kids every day. I do not have discipline problems. I have not had any problems in my three years of teaching. I think any teacher who thinks "Don't be nice" is good advice should not be giving advice to new teachers.

Brandon Green
Midland City, Alabama

YOGA IN SCHOOL

Wow! When did teachers gain the ability to determine when a physical act associated with a religion has (or in this case doesn't have) spiritual value? Is the physical act of yoga relaxing and focusing the students mentally, or does yoga bring about some sort of spiritual transformation that places the student in a relaxed spiritual state of being (Health and Fitness, October 2002)? I don't think any human being can truthfully answer.

Can teachers also make kids face Mecca five times a day or not eat meat on Friday because it keeps the students focused?

This seems like an obvious breach of the separation of church and state.

Todd Beuke
Sequim, Washington

SOCIAL SECURITY

I sent Senator Olympia Snowe of Maine a copy of your article on

BY REG WEAVER



A Respect Shortage

There has been a lot of talk about a teacher shortage. But what's really in short supply is respect for teachers.

At the start of every school year, we read in the newspaper—hear on the radio—see on the television—stories about schools scrambling to hire teachers. The “teacher shortage” stories are as predictable as the autumn leaves. And this year, a new federal law has sparked even more discussion about the teacher supply problem. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act requires that every teacher in every classroom in every public school in the United States must be “highly qualified” by the spring of 2006.

This is a bold and noble goal—one that NEA has advocated for years and heartily supports. But school administrators, the people who must implement the goal, are already voicing doubts about achieving it. As one urban school superintendent said: “A third of our new teachers have emergency credentials. I don’t know where we are going to find highly qualified teachers to fill every classroom.”

Is there really a shortage of qualified teachers? I would say so. And why? Because there is a “shortage of respect.”

Each year, America’s colleges of education could produce enough new teachers to replace retiring teachers and meet the needs of growing student enrollments. The problem is not that too few men and women desire to come into the profession. The problem is that there are too many sacrifices that must be made to realize success in the profession. And the solution is not to develop alternative routes of entry into the profession or to increase the supply of recruits by allowing prospective teachers to skip “burdensome” education courses or student teaching. The solution is to show a little R-E-S-P-E-C-T, and show us the money.

We are short of qualified teachers because education and educators have not been given the respect that we deserve. Respect that is reflected in our work environment—modern schools, small class sizes, and adequate resources. Respect that is reflected in our compensation—educators should not have to sacrifice the desire to pursue an honorable profession in order to provide a decent standard of living for their families. Change those conditions and the teacher quality, recruitment, and retention issues will vanish.

Don’t get me wrong. Teaching is a tough, tough job, and not everyone is cut out for it. However, teacher turnover on the scale that we are experiencing today is disastrous. Consider these facts:

- Almost a third of America’s teachers leave the profession sometime during their first three years of teaching, and almost half leave after five years.
- Teacher drop-out rates are highest in the areas of special education, mathematics, and science; in these fields nearly 20 percent of the teachers leave each year.
- In urban schools, poor and minority students are three to four times more likely to have an inexperienced teacher than students in wealthier districts. (Research tells us that students of experienced teachers do significantly better than students of inexperienced teachers—those with less than two to three years of experience.)

There is no wonder that we—NEA—cannot and will not accept the status quo. Our students deserve better.

My friends, our challenge as an Association is to “teach” policymakers in 2002 and 2004. They must understand what respect means to us: professional pay, mentoring and professional development, modern facilities, and smaller class sizes—it means consulting with us, not dictating to us on education reform.

Gimmicks and cutting corners will never put a qualified teacher in every classroom. But respect will.

Comments? E-mail Reg Weaver at RegWeaver@nea.org.

the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision. (On Your Side, September 2002). When I began to draw my Social Security at age 62, I did not know about these punitive measures.

As a youngster I worked in the potato fields of Presque Isle, Maine, and in the summers I worked in construction on the Loring Air Force Base. I also worked summers to finance my college years and to help my family in Alaska. I had no idea these earnings were going to be discounted when I retired after 27 years in a wonderful career of teaching because of the GPO and WEP.

As a beginning teacher, I expected to work summers as my salary was so low. When I retired, however, I found that my Social Security was reduced. I am really angry. What does my working summers have to do with my teacher retirement from the State of Alaska?

Thanks for helping me understand something I was too naïve to care about at the time of my youthful exuberance and later when my aging parents needed me.

William Lyford
Cumberland Center, Maine

TEACHING TEACHERS

There are many efforts to improve public education so no student will be left behind (Learning, May 2002), yet perhaps the major factor in improving teacher quality is not assessed: the instruction provided by colleges of education.

During 32 years of teaching, I have heard very few positive comments about the relevance of college education courses to today’s classrooms.

When a college of education is ranked, the ranking is mainly based on the monetary grants its program accumulates. No one evaluates its quality of teaching. One of my former student teachers noted: “I took a course titled ‘The Eight Best Approaches to Teaching in the Classroom.’ During the entire term, the college instructor didn’t demonstrate one of them.”

As teachers, we deal with students daily. We develop and evaluate curriculum that works well for

students. We must insist that colleges of education have quality people who have worked successfully in the classroom, and who enjoy teaching. These are the only people who should be teaching future teachers.

Robert Rubinstein
Eugene, Oregon

Editor’s note: NEA helped found and strongly supports the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, which insists on high-quality teacher education programs. Visit www.ncate.org.

A GRAND READING PLAN

Does anyone really believe we can get all kids reading on grade level (Learning, May 2002)? Perhaps with homogeneous grouping; removing cable TV, VCRs, and video games from kids’ homes; allowing us to teach spelling and grammar, etc., we could get close.

While we are at it, let’s also have no kids on drugs, no kids abused, all parents involved and supportive, all needed materials in every school, and every kid thinking it’s just great to learn every day! Wouldn’t that be grand!

Gary Wilson
North East, Maryland

GO TO CLASS

If I wrote an education law (Learning, May 2002), I would require that all students attend all classes. This may sound obvious. But, it is my experience that even though students are in school, too often they are pulled out of the classroom for various reasons, such as sporting events, band and choir practices, field trips, reward and incentive parties, “Take Your Child to Work” day, plays, and other extracurricular activities. I cannot teach students who are not in my classroom.

Marie-Anne Eickholt
Junction City, Kansas

MORE LAWS WON’T HELP

I am a retired teacher and have seen many laws implemented that were guaranteed to improve education (Learning, May 2002). None of them worked. When will state and national governments learn that a quality education cannot be legislated?

The way to improve the quality of public education is to pay teachers enough to guarantee that the brightest and best remain in the classroom instead of taking more lucrative jobs in other fields.

Parents also must accept responsibility for teaching their children to value an education and enforce rules at home so that rules in school don’t seem unusual.

We need to return to good common sense.

Carmelita Parrish
Macon, Georgia

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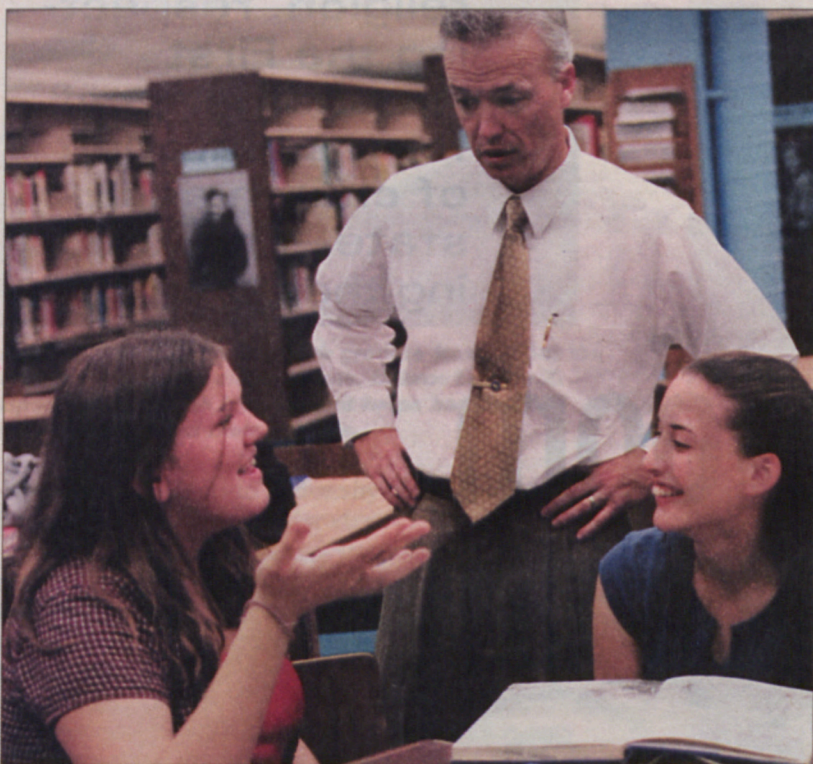
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Degrees in Thinkology

Is education about developing brains or bestowing parchments?

BY JOHN DESMOND



Michael Quan

President Bush's educational plan, which had overwhelming support in Congress, is a disappointment to this teacher. And in light of its popularity, it seems that many people have lost sight of the true purpose and essence of education.

Many parents believe that high test scores will turn into a college acceptance, which will then turn into employment opportunities. To many, this is the purpose of education—knowledge for money. Our school administrators and politicians respond to this attitude and are now turning our public schools into test preparation centers instead of places of genuine learning.

This is not to say that an education isn't to be used to prepare for a career, but to think of it only in those terms is damaging to society. It trivializes knowledge and eliminates the concepts of understanding and perspective. By associating knowledge only with material gain, we create a society where we only study to pass a test, or to appear on a game show where questions concerning the works of Michelangelo are of equal importance as those about "Gilligan's Island."

Worse than that, we have institutionalized this attitude. Our schools and the family itself have willingly used the "knowledge for material-

ism" concept to motivate our young to do their homework.

This philosophy diminishes the meaning of education and the significance of our diplomas and degrees. I am reminded of the scene in *The Wizard of Oz* in which the Scarecrow asks for a brain and is told by the Wizard that the world is run by people who have even less brains than he has, but they have one thing that he hasn't got. At this point the Wizard pulls a piece of parchment out of his bag and presents it to the Scarecrow as a degree in "Thinkology." As I observe the educational policies of our leaders, I suspect they have sorely missed the point.

The responsibility of a public school is not to mass-produce worker bees, nor to be a farm system for colleges. A public school is meant to construct the foundation upon which a person may build a meaningful life. For an education is not achieved by the age of 17 or 18 as test scores and diplomas might insinuate; it is a lifetime endeavor. This is why we call graduation ceremonies "commencements." They are beginnings, not ends.

The purpose of education is to empower and enrich the individual. It is to give people understanding, perspective, and dignity so that they may better deal with whatever the fates throw their way. Education makes each of us better able to appreciate the life we've been given.

It allows us to listen to the people of the past and gives us the ability to speak to the future. It grants us wisdom that can be used in so many ways: to explain the difference between love and sex to our children, to see what real wealth is, to have insight into "the road less traveled" as well as the one most traveled. It helps us understand such things as courage, integrity, friendship, ethics, human nature, and truth. It will even allow us to see ourselves... if we dare.

Unfortunately, this definition of education is dismissed as naïve, idealistic, and therefore, foolish. That is why public education seems to be failing. Without the attitude toward education that I have described, everything we teach is without its proper context, and is therefore labeled as irrelevant unless it leads to material success. We will create a society in which we rear our children to believe that success is the ability to satisfy all of their appetites, a society where "greed is good."

In his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman reminds us that we have been warned about such a society. Postman tells us that in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, the people came to love their oppression, and adored the technologies that crippled their capacities to think. He wrote that "Huxley feared that there would be no reason to ban a book for there would be no one who wanted to read one" and "the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance." If you are familiar with the offerings of modern television and films, then I ask you, how close are we to such a world?

It is my belief that the new program of education reform through standardized testing contributes to the Huxleyan vision. It will narrow the scope of our curriculums to only those things that are tested. It will kill the creativity of those great teachers who understand what education is all about but who are pressured to teach to the test. It will destroy the curiosity of the students by making the process of learning repetitive and tedious.

If this is what education is reduced to, then our diplomas will be nothing more than degrees in "Thinkology." ✓

John Desmond teaches history at Billerica Memorial High School in Billerica, Massachusetts.

Every so often we hear about NEA members years after their original stories have run in *NEA Today*.

Fifteen years ago, we told Lois Wren's story on the "You and the Law" page. Wren was fired illegally, reinstated twice, and then, because of all the stress, she resigned and sued her school district. With the help of the Wyoming Education Association and the NEA she prevailed.

Though she felt compelled to quit her position and move to California, she was grateful that the Association had come to her rescue. "The



Bill Fischer
editor

NEA helped save my teaching career, but now that I am close to retirement, I wanted to share in my continued success." She went on to describe her work teaching high school science in Sacramento.

Twenty years ago, I interviewed Michigan teacher Lynn Larson for a story about why it's important to join the Association. At the time, Larson was just beginning what turned out to be more than 20 years of Association activism. A few months ago, NEA's retired magazine, *This Active Life*, ran a story about Larson, now retired. After all these years, Larson had decided she still wanted the challenge of the classroom...in China. So off she went to teach there.

Seven years ago we wrote about Charlene Dindo, an elementary science teacher, from Fairhope, Alabama. She'd developed a program for science teachers to help students learn the mysteries of the Gulf's marine life. A month ago, I received a press release announcing the recipients of this year's Albert Einstein Distinguished Educators Awards. Charlene Dindo is one of the 12 Einstein fellows. She'll be in Washington, D.C., for 10 months working in a federal agency with an opportunity to share her teacher's insights at the national level.

Have you been featured in *NEA Today*? We'd love to hear what you're up to.

Bill Fischer

Navigating Religion in the Classroom

Educators are teaching about religion, respecting the First Amendment call for a separation of church and state—and keeping their own faith.



Susan Sanford

In 1984, Utah middle school teacher Martha Ball discovered just how sensitive schools had become to religious issues in the classroom.

During a middle school class on U.S. and Utah history, “I made this innocuous remark about how we were going to study the Mormon migration west,” Ball recalls. “And one kid said, ‘You use the word ‘Mormon’ in this classroom and my dad will sue you.’”

Stunned, Ball went to her principal, who warned her to avoid the topic. The head of the school’s history department agreed and told Ball she was “asking for major problems” if she explored the subject any further.

Now retired, Ball works to transform such attitudes as director of the Utah 3Rs project, a model program aimed at helping educators teach about religions in ways that are both constitutionally appropriate and educationally worthwhile. In part because of projects like 3Rs, the environment around incorporating religion appropriately in the curriculum has changed since Ball’s clash 18 years ago.

“The question for most teachers now is not, ‘Should I teach about religion or not?’” says Charles Haynes, director of the First Amendment Center of the Freedom Forum and a leading expert on religion in schools. “Teachers now want to know, How do I do it?”

What’s the best way to do it? What are some of the pitfalls and the challenges, and what materials are available?”

Guiding the overall discourse is the First Amendment, which says the government must remain neutral toward religion. Public school educators must tread what is at times a nebulous line—teaching neutrally about religion, honoring their students’ personal views on religion, and observing their own beliefs privately.

So teachers need answers. Is my annual classroom “Christmas party” OK? (No.) Can I wear a Star of David in school? (Yes.) Can I assign my world history students to read the Old Testament? (It depends.)

CHANGING THE MODEL

The “sacred public school,” with the Protestant Bible as its centerpiece, prevailed in U.S. public education through the 19th century, says Haynes. But a turn-of-the-century push to remove all religious instruction from the public schools left just a few vestiges of the Protestant school model—devotional Bible readings and organized prayer—remaining as the 20th century emerged. Then cultural shifts of the mid-20th century and court decisions of the 1960s altered the model further, and public schools became viewed erroneously as places where religion was not addressed.

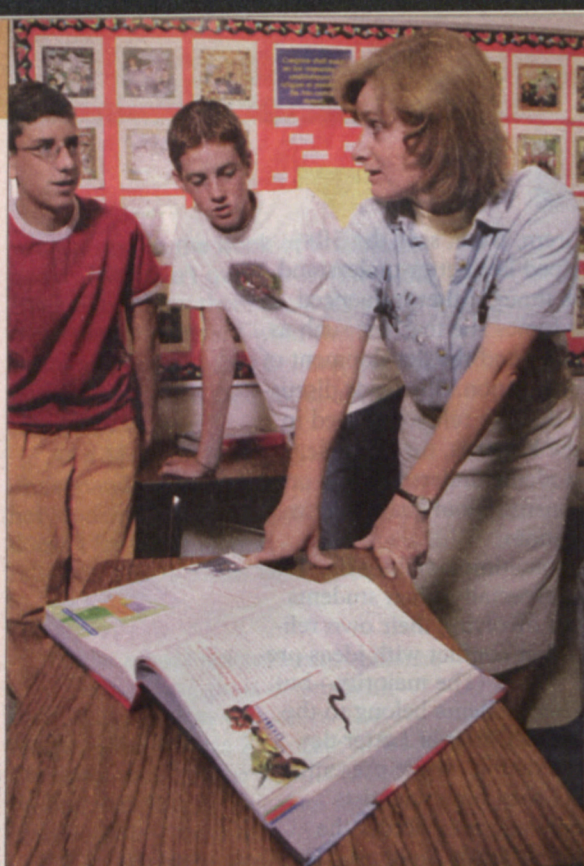
Worried that they might be perceived as endorsing religious viewpoints, many teachers shied away from even legitimate lessons on the role of religious leaders or religious thought in history and culture. Publishers were squeamish as well. Ball remembers a 1980s world geography textbook with “one page on major religions in the entire book.” Another textbook series referred to the Pilgrims as “travelers.”

Now, the picture is changing once again. “There’s no question that this is a new day on issues of religion in schools, both in terms of teaching about religion and in terms of religious liberty rights of kids,” says Haynes.

Finding Common Ground: A Guide to Religious Liberty in Public Schools, published in 2001 by the First Amendment Center, includes guidelines endorsed by a broad spectrum of faith-based and education groups, including the NEA. The U.S. Department of Education also offers *Finding Common Ground* as a resource on its website (see “Resources,” page 11).

Generally, the guidelines note that a school’s approach to religion should:

- focus on studies about religion, not the practice of religion;
- be academic, not devotional;
- strive for student awareness of religions, but not press for student acceptance of any religion;



Above: Julie Stanger's eighth graders learn about the role of religion in colonial times. **Below:** Loretta Z. Speed says church involvement helps her connect with students and their families.

- expose students to a diversity of religious views, but not impose any particular view.

So how do these guidelines translate to the classroom? *Finding Common Ground* advises teachers to let the grade level of their students and the academic requirements of their courses dictate how much instruction to include.

Holidays can provide timely opportunities to educate students about various religions. Teachers may include lessons about the origins of various holidays, how and when they are celebrated, and their meanings. They also may display religious symbols during these lessons, but only on a temporary basis and as part of the academic program.

The courts do not consider items such as Christmas trees religious symbols. But Haynes notes that educators often can avoid debates over the use of trees at Christmas, bunnies at Easter, and similar images by providing a comprehensive curriculum that accurately and fairly addresses a variety of religious holidays throughout the year.

Rae Baczek, a math teacher at Greenwich High School in Connecticut, uses religious holidays to respond to her students' questions about her own faith, Judaism. Her district recognizes days such as Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as school holidays, so students often ask Baczek about their significance and meaning, she says.

But schools must limit themselves to instruction about the holi-

'Moved by Your Convictions'

Arizona educators partner with religious groups on family agenda.

To educate the whole child, members of the Arizona Education Association know they must start by educating themselves about the community. So they're reaching out to institutions that gather community members together on a weekly basis: churches.

Through a partnership with the Arizona Interfaith Network (AIN), a group of grassroots organizations focused on issues affecting working families, AEA affiliates collaborate with faith-based groups, neighborhood associations, and other unions on community organizing efforts.

"We really benefit from having a partnership with a group of people who aren't educators because it gives us another viewpoint," says Sheryl Allen Erickson, president of the Mesa Education Association. "It's helpful for us to realize what the issues are in our area. It improves our perspective, and we can see how these other issues relate to what we are doing in the school district."

AIN includes about 125 different organizations, most faith-based. Organizing efforts tend to start in churches and synagogues because these institutions have a history of supporting families and building community, says Frank Pearson, AIN director. Religious organizations also draw a significant number of people together at least once a week, he adds.

State and local Association leaders acknowledge that some AEA members have reservations about working so closely with religious groups. But most members support the partnership and realize it focuses on promoting an agenda that favors families, and not the interests of an individual faith.

"This is not about a Catholic person or Methodist person volunteering in a school, promoting a religious doctrine," says Pam Simon, president of the Marana Education Association in Tucson. "It's about being moved by your convictions for social change. We explain Interfaith this way: For some, it is about a faith in God or a creator. For others, the faith is in the democratic process and living out that faith in democracy."

All AIN members commit to a common political agenda focused on education, health care, wages and benefits, the rights of immigrants, and crime reduction. Through local partnerships, organized around five regional networks, AIN members promote this agenda with joint lobbying efforts, candidate forums, and conversations with community members about the issues families face. Each local network also maintains a staff of skilled organizers who provide support and training to members.

"What's neat is sometimes you have educators talking about immigrant issues and Episcopalians talking about school issues. It's very much a two-way street," says Will Moore, executive director of the Mesa Education Association and Mesa Education Support Professional Association. "The leaders of the churches have an opportunity to engage with us and develop an understanding of what we are talking about, and it's given us a broader base in the community."

By working together, members of the Interfaith Network present a united front to legislators as well, says John Wright, vice president of the Arizona Education Association.

"It's very powerful to have the education community and the church parishes and the neighborhood organizations there together," he says. "These community-based efforts raise awareness of the issues facing working families and bring these issues onto the larger agenda so state policymakers can no longer ignore them. It's the perfect example of grassroots organizing leading to a larger voice."

Meanwhile, local Associations benefit from the training they receive on effective organizing. The partnerships also generate support for education issues among other members of the network. And AEA members learn more about the social and economic issues affecting the families of the children they teach and work on legislative initiatives designed to address those needs.

"Being part of AIN has helped amplify our voice on the importance of education, but we also are raising the awareness of educators that there are more issues than just those inside the classroom walls that affect education," says Simon. "If the father can't find work or the child is poorly fed, that all affects the child in the classroom."

—Kristen Loschert

"For some, it is about a faith in God. For others, the faith is in the democratic process and living out that faith in democracy."

days—which is permissible—and avoid celebrating religious holidays—which is not. (For more, see “What About Christmas?” below.)

Religious holidays, though, are just one way to help students better understand how religious faiths shape history and culture. Baczek, for example, used a vandalism incident at her high school to engage students in a discussion about prejudice and anti-Semitism. In elementary grades, lessons on family, community, the nation, and various cultures may involve discussions of major faiths. Similarly, secondary classes in the social studies, literature, and the arts often include instruction about religions.

“Teach it where it naturally occurs in the curriculum,” Ball advises.

KNOWING WHAT TO TEACH

The law does not require equal instructional time for all religions, but teachers should use sound educational

reasoning when deciding which religions to include in a course, says Haynes. For instance, a U.S. history course may emphasize the Christian faith and the role it played in colonial history. At the same time, a world history course that overlooks Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam is incomplete. Teachers should consider regional influences as well, and include discussions about the roles local faiths have played in their community’s history.

The Utah 3Rs project, which receives support from the Utah Department of Education and uses materials developed by the First Amendment Center, helps teachers address these kinds of religious issues in the curriculum. Last year, teachers at five Utah schools serving 3,000 students received training in the 3Rs (which stands for Rights, Responsibilities, and Respect).

Julie Stanger, an eighth-grade U.S. history teacher at Lakeridge Junior High

School in Orem, Utah, says the 3Rs program helped her better understand the religious thought that influenced some of the topics she teaches, such as colonial history and the development of the U.S. Constitution. She leads discussions about the role religion played in the life of the Puritans, for example, and helps students understand the origins for a constitutional guarantee to religious freedom.

Stanger sometimes walks a fine line in her class, especially when students ask questions involving their own religious views that conflict with ideas presented in a lesson. (The majority—but not all—of her students belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.) For example, while presenting information about how scientists believe people migrated across the Bering Strait to North America, “The kids will ask me, ‘What about what it says in the Book of Mormon?’” she says. “I don’t respond by telling them

What About Christmas? Advice About Holidays...and More

What are some ways teachers can—and cannot—teach about religious holidays?

Lessons about religious holidays may focus on how and when they are celebrated, their origins, histories, and meanings. Teachers may display religious symbols as teaching aids only temporarily and as part of the academic program. Students may choose to create artwork with religious symbols, but teachers should not suggest they do so. Music study and performances may include sacred music, but religious songs should not dominate performances, especially when they coincide with a specific holiday. Dramatic productions should emphasize the cultural aspects of a holiday. Nativity pageants or plays depicting the Hanukkah miracle, for instance, are not appropriate.

Can I put a Christmas tree in my room?

The courts no longer consider a Christmas tree a religious symbol, so displaying one does not create a legal dilemma. But for many people the symbol still carries a religious connotation. Educators should strive to create holiday programs that do not make any student feel excluded or forced to identify with a specific religion. Ultimately, the best decision depends on your individual school and community.

Can students write about their religious beliefs as part of a class assignment?

Yes. For example, if a teacher asks students to write about a historical figure who greatly influenced their thinking, students can write about people drawn from religious traditions. Their work should be judged by typical academic standards.

What about students’ oral presentations? Teachers must ensure that students’ presentations of their religious views do not cross the line to proselytizing. For example: If a student giving an oral report on a religious figure in history veers to challenging classmates to believe in a particular religion, the teacher should intervene. Experts suggest that the

teacher talk to the student privately about the purposes of the assignment and why schools do not allow proselytizing to a captive classroom audience. It would also be wise to inform the students’ parents and school administrators about the incident.

Can I invite guest speakers with specialized knowledge to support lessons about religion?

As a first—and essential—step, follow your district’s policy concerning guest speakers. Depending on the policy, a local religious leader may be a valuable resource for presenting information on religious issues or history being studied. A guest speaker from a local college or community organization also may be a good choice. Ensure that guest speakers understand both the nature of your assignment and the First Amendment guidelines for teaching about religion.

Can school employees wear clothing or jewelry with a religious message?

Teachers may wear modest jewelry, such as a cross or Star of David, but may not wear clothing with a proselytizing message. Schools may permit employees to wear religious attire as well, such as a yarmulke, but the schools are not required to permit it.

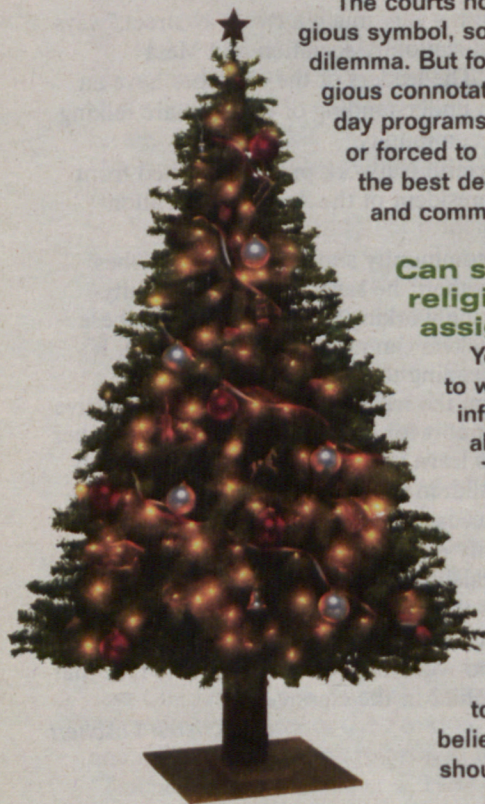
Can education employees pray on school grounds?

School employees may pray silently to themselves, but may not pray with or in the presence of students. Employees may organize scripture readings or other devotional activities outside the view of students and when they’re not on duty.

What should I do if parents ask me to ensure their child observes a specific religious obligation, such as not eating a certain type of food?

School employees are not required to monitor the child’s compliance. Enforcing religious obligations is not a teacher’s responsibility.

Source: The above recommendations are drawn from guidelines endorsed by major faith-based and education groups, including NEA, and published in *Finding Common Ground: A Guide to Religious Liberty in Public Schools* (First Amendment Center, 2001).



what it says in the Book of Mormon, just as I wouldn't quote from the Bible. I talk about how there are a lot of beliefs and theories. I want them to contemplate what they believe, but I'm not out to change their mind about what they believe."

As a Mormon herself, Stanger understands the religious perspective her students bring to class, but she doesn't let her students'—or her own—religious beliefs direct her instruction.

KEEPING THE FAITH

Public school teachers must balance their personal religious beliefs with their obligations as educators. For teachers like Loretta Z. Speed, a devout Christian active in the Baptist church, finding that balance does not mean compromising her faith.

"If a child were to ask me about my religion in class, I would tell him he would have to see me after class," says Speed, who teaches creative writing at Green Oaks High School in Shreveport, Louisiana. "I come in with a lesson plan, and my personal religious beliefs are not part of that."

Although Speed's faith does not influence her lessons, her religion has influenced her relationships with her students' families. Many of them attend Speed's church, one of the largest in the community. Parents and grandparents recognize her from church, Speed says, and having that pre-existing connection helps, especially when she has to call a child's home and talk about behavior or performance.

NEA state affiliates, such as the New Jersey Education Association, also recognize the benefits of connecting with parents through their churches. Through a partnership with the Black Ministers' Council of New Jersey, NJEA provides training to parents, especially minority families, on ways they can become more involved in school. The partnership,



Utah history teacher Julie Stanger includes lessons on the Puritans and other religious groups to help students understand the concept of religious freedom.

called "Families and Schools Together Work for Children," was piloted in nine communities last year.

"In our cities, the churches provide a strong link to parents and families," says NJEA President Edithe Fulton. "While this is a pilot program, we've already experienced the fruits of our labors in a number of communities."

Since constitutional law stipulates that educators remain neutral concerning religion while exercising their duties in school, staff may find their own religious expression limited during school hours. For example, educators may pray silently to themselves, but may not pray with or in the presence of students.

Educators like Speed understand that. "Sometimes there has to be a separation on the job, but it doesn't separate your belief," Speed says. You have to remember you are a public servant."

STAYING AFLOAT

Preparation and knowledge are key to helping teachers present accurate and fair lessons about religion. Axel

Ramirez, a former teacher at Lakeridge Junior High and now assistant professor of education at Utah Valley State College in Orem, says teacher education programs must do more to help teachers feel comfortable about incorporating religion into the curriculum.

Haynes agrees and encourages teachers, especially those in the social studies, to take religious studies courses to broaden their knowledge. More prospective teachers are pursuing those kinds of classes; but many still encounter roadblocks because such classes often don't count toward the credits necessary for certification.

Ramirez and others offer some final tips for navigating the sometimes tricky waters of teaching about religion:

- Become an expert in the subject matter. Covering religious content is still sensitive, so it's especially important to have a solid grounding in content matter.
 - Choose lessons and content that fit your core curriculum and standards.
- Teachers should articulate the desired outcomes of their teaching and have a sound rationale for how studying religious content will help students attain learning goals.

- Set the right tone in the classroom. The classroom atmosphere must be conducive to respectful discourse. In his social studies classes, Ramirez would begin by having students talk about the golden rule (treat others as you would want to be treated), which appears in one form or another in many religions. From there, he'd tell students, "When we discuss other belief systems, we do this with respect and with an understanding that religion helps make them who they are. We're going to study this with an open mind and respect, at the same time not forgetting that we can agree to disagree, move on, and learn."

- Keep parents well-informed. "If the parents know that you will be dealing with things that can be sensitive, but that you are trained and are going to keep them informed, then they won't be surprised," says Ramirez. ✓

—John O'Neil and Kristen Loschert

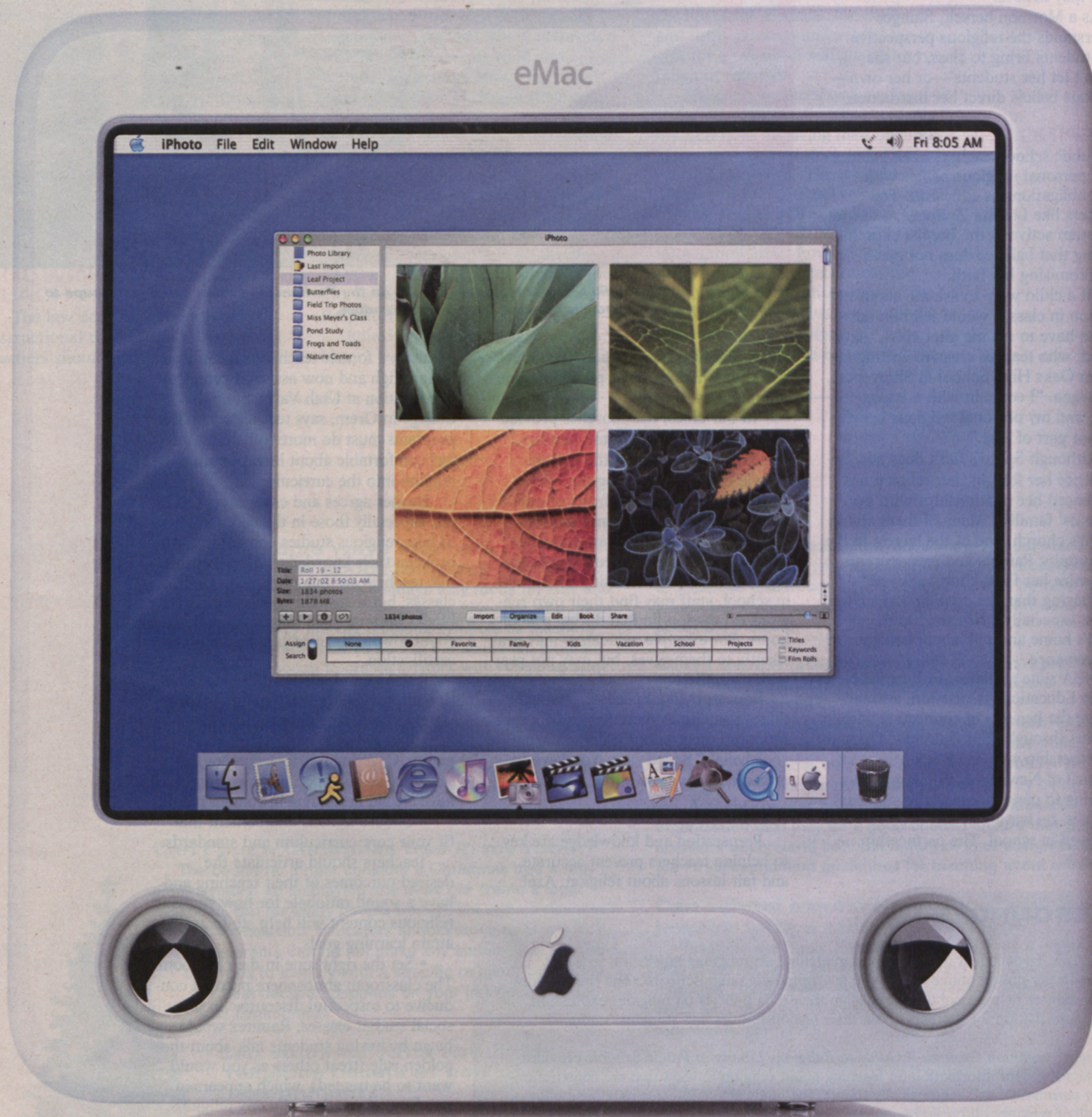
RESOURCES

The U.S. Department of Education's guidelines on religious expression in public schools are posted online at www.ed.gov/inits/religionandschools/. The site includes materials to help school districts design their own policies on religious expression and information for teachers about their responsibilities and students' rights.

Finding Common Ground: A Guide to Religious Liberty in Public Schools provides straightforward information on teaching about religion in ways that are constitutionally permissible and academically sound. The guide also addresses religious holidays, student religious clubs, and major court rulings. Download a free copy from www.freedomforum.org or order a hard copy for \$19.95 from the First Amendment Center, 1207 18th Ave. South, Nashville, TN 37212; 615/727-1600.

Religion in American Life, a 16-title series from Oxford University Press, offers material written by scholars specifically directed at junior and senior high school students. Separate volumes cover major religious faiths in America, as well as topics such as immigration and women and religion. \$24 for each title. For more information, visit www.oup-usa.org.

Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum, by Warren Nord and Charles Haynes, offers thoughtful advice on teaching about religion in various content areas. Access the full text online by going to www.ascd.org/framebooks.html and linking to the author or title. Or order the print version for \$18.95 from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1703 N. Beauregard St., Alexandria, VA 22311; 800/933-2723.



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'Professionals Deserve Respect'

The school year opens with disputes over competitive pay, health care, and professional respect. A snapshot from a Rhode Island strike. . .



Photos by Karen Jenkins

Teachers in Scituate, Rhode Island, struck for nine days in September. Their issues resembled those in other educator contract disputes.

Educators in Scituate, Rhode Island, are as good as they come. Their students outscored peers in every other district in recent state tests, and all five of their schools have been designated by the state as "high performing."

Not surprisingly, the 150-member Scituate Teachers Association (STA) has state and nationally recognized practitioners in its ranks, from winners of the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award to Rhode Island's 2002 Teacher of the Year.

But as proficient as its teachers and education support professionals are, this affluent district has been slow to recognize its richest assets.

Scituate's failure to offer a competitive teacher salary or any health care package upon retirement—standard in neighboring districts—prompted one Milken Award winner to leave. And its dismal paraeducator pay (until recently, just \$6.54 per hour to start) forced a

teacher assistant to quit for more money at a Barnes & Noble bookstore.

This staff neglect, compounded by the Scituate School Committee's use of a labor-unfriendly attorney to slow down contract bargaining, put this rural Rhode Island district in the news at the beginning of the school year.

STA members struck for nine days, with the full support of teacher assistants and custodial/maintenance workers in two other NEA local affiliates in Scituate.

Friction points in this standoff—including lagging pay and benefits and employer demands for a 20 percent health insurance co-pay—resembled those in other beginning-of-the-year contract disputes across the nation.

The overwhelming majority of these conflicts were settled peacefully with new, signed contracts. But NEA members in some 20 local affiliates—in Illinois, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Washington—were forced to walk off the job by press time.

"Ask educators forced out on strike what they'd rather be doing, and they'll tell you they'd rather be working with young people," stresses NEA President Reg Weaver. "But too often, teachers and ESPs are asked to do an important job, but not given pay and support to come into and stay in the profession."

"Many times, a strike brings mem-

bers closer together," Weaver adds. "And in most instances, it's community support that enables them to stand firm to offer the best education to children."

Parent Support Makes a Difference
Community backing is precisely what helped Scituate teachers and ESPs reach contract settlements.

Scituate parents were keenly aware of the value of their kids' educators and angry over the snail's pace of contract bargaining. Some said at a school committee meeting that they'd even swallow a tax hike to give assistants a raise.

When teachers finally hit the bricks, "many parents extended support to us through phone calls and e-mails, and some even sent food and coffee to the picket line," says STA President Ken Abrams, an eighth-grade social studies teacher at Scituate Middle School.

When they were totally fed up, parents staged their own march from a park to the town administration building, where they merged with a column of picketing teachers and ESPs. Two parents even charged inside to pose tough questions to the superintendent.

If that weren't pressure enough, the state judge who issued a back-to-work order to teachers also ordered the school committee to bargain in person—without its legal hired gun.

Teachers negotiated a new contract by the time they returned to work, and bargaining quickly moved to ESP issues.

Among other gains, teachers won the mean state salary, with an additional \$400, \$500, and \$650 over the next three years. While STA failed to win retirement health care, it did gain a \$3,000 "retirement stipend" in each of those three years for teachers with 30 years or more in the district.

STA also headed off demands for a health premium co-pay of 20 percent—

[FACTS AND FIGURES]

Economic Facts of Life for Educators

NEA Research has compared the average earnings of all non-teachers with a college degree against the average earnings of all K-12 teachers with a college degree. Adjusting for inflation, the pay gap was 11.2 percent in 1940, 18.4 percent in 1950, 36 percent in 1960, 52.3 percent in 1970, 45.2 percent in 1980, 40.7 percent in 1990, and 50.6 percent in 2000—and not in teachers' favor.

And according to the 2002 Annual Employer Health Benefits Survey released by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research and Educational Trust (at www.kff.org), all workers are paying more for health insurance while ben-

efits erode. Some disturbing findings include:

- Single premiums are now, on average, \$3,060 for single coverage and \$7,954 for family coverage.
- For single coverage, employees now pay an average of \$454 per year—a 27 percent or \$95 increase from last year. The employee share of premiums for family coverage averaged \$2,084 per year—a 16 percent or \$283 increase from last year.
- Deductibles for preferred provider organization (PPO) in-network providers rose 37 percent to \$276 in 2002, up from \$201 last year.

**SCITUATE
TEACHERS
ARE THE
BEST!**





Parent support helped bring about settlement of the Scituate strike. At one point, families joined the picket line with teachers and support professionals.

it will be capped at 7.75 percent.

In ESP bargaining, custodial/maintenance workers actually rejected a tentative agreement and improved the final offer—a rare occurrence. They won a two-year, concession-free contract with raises of 4.9 percent and 4 percent.

And, after more than 15 months of bargaining, low-paid teacher assistants negotiated one- and three-year pacts that will boost pay by 25 to 45 percent over four years and provide a 50-cent-per-hour stipend for special ed duties.

Assistants won these, their first contracts, “because of collective pressure by our three locals on the school committee, our public outreach, and the parent march,” points out UniServ Director John Leidecker.

And Now the Bad News...

Good bargaining news, however welcome, can't mask the fact that NEA local negotiators face ever-tougher challenges at the table. Some of the big ones:

- **Educator pay keeps falling further behind.** The gap between the pay of teachers and other college-educated workers is at a 60-year high (see box on page 14), forcing Association bargainers to roll up their sleeves.

Among other gimmicks, school board negotiators “try to save money by lengthening the number of years it takes to reach the top step of the salary schedule,” notes Pennsylvania State Education Association staffer Ted MacArthur. In response, he says, PSEA “tries to maintain the integrity of the schedule” by opposing addition of new steps or increments, redistributing savings from retirements of higher paid staff back through the schedule, and winning percentage increases that “give hope” to staffers with less seniority.

- **Health care costs are going through the roof.** NEA state affiliates in both Pennsylvania and Indiana report average health care cost increases of 20 percent-plus per year, which can make a mess of salary bargaining.

For the first time since 1975, NEA members in deficit-wracked Indiana are bargaining average annual pay hikes of less than 3 percent. On top of that, they face growing employer demands

for “benefit design” changes—through higher co-pays and deductibles, including emergency room deductibles.

“In our state, a number of districts face premium increases by as much as 100 percent,” says Indiana State Teachers' Association staffer Wally Cantrell. “That translates into a direct pay cut.”

“Many parents extended support to us through phone calls and e-mails, and some even sent food and coffee to the picket line”

—STA President Ken Abrams

• Respect is still in short supply.

The “last straw” in educator contract disputes isn't always a money issue. It can be a school board's refusal to meet face-to-face with teachers or ESPs, or a board demand that administrators be given unilateral authority to assign cafeteria duties to teachers.

Too often, educators are “treated as kids, not adults,” laments Scituate local leader Ken Abrams. “We need to seize our own professional status. It's difficult, but not impossible.” ✓

—Dave Winans

Five Steps to a Living Wage

Following a tough, 18-month campaign, the 220-member Ithaca (New York) Paraprofessionals Association has made ESP bargaining history. Last summer, IPA members ratified a three-year agreement that gives paras on the low end of the pay scale an immediate 38 percent increase, and raises starting pay by 50 percent by the end of the contract. A teacher's aide who made \$6.72 an hour went to \$9.36 on July 1, and will earn \$10.01 in 2004.

This NEA local affiliate's successful drive for a living wage can be replicated, insists IPA President Debbie Minnick, a 17-year paraeducator. Here, Minnick says, is how other struggling education support professionals—and teachers—can start the ball rolling in their communities:

1. **Do some research.** “First, learn what a living wage is—it's not a federal or state minimum wage. A living wage is what it takes for you to live in your community and pay your bills, without having to sacrifice your family life to second or third jobs. Collect data from different community sources. We took an Ithaca-area living wage estimate calculated by a local credit union, and then prorated it for our 10-month work schedule.”

2. **Devise a bargaining strategy.** “Decide how you're going to propose that your district pay a living wage. You're going to have to back up whatever you ask for. Figure out your arguments ahead of time; play it all out. Role-play an actual bargaining session. Have somebody with a good knowledge of the living wage issue play the devil's advocate—and have your answers ready.”

3. **Organize a living wage coalition.** “You can start in your community by pulling in other employees, parents, community groups, and churches. Fortunately, we already had such a coalition in Ithaca, which we expanded when bargaining heated up. We could not have accomplished what we did without the coalition building we did with groups like the Midstate Labor Coalition, AFL-CIO; the Tompkins County Living Wage Coalition; the Labor-Religious Task Force; parents; and Cornell University students.”

4. **Stay united and committed.** “We won because our members were committed to the cause; they would not give in. We kept communications open with them, kept them up to date, and kept them involved.”

5. **Get Association back-up.** “You need to rely heavily on your NEA state affiliate and NEA itself for resources and materials. We had lots of assistance from NEA/New York officers and staff.” ✓



Ithaca Paraprofessional Association President Debbie Minnick, at far right, has some solid advice for other ESPs—and struggling teachers—seeking a living wage.

Tim McKinney

For more advice on starting a living wage campaign, contact Debbie Minnick at Debbieipa@aol.com. For background on Ithaca paras' poverty pay, go to www.nea.org/neatoday/0111/news1.html.

The More You Learn, The More You Earn

Paraeducators in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, are making their work a *profession*—thanks to collective bargaining and a state law.



Photos by Mark Tade

Early childhood paraeducator Michele Carter (left) says special ed teacher Emily Dolezal (right) "wants me to use what I've learned through coursework and is willing to take suggestions. That makes me feel comfortable and relaxed."

If you want to know the hallmarks of a quality paraeducator, just go to experts such as Lynn Bounds, Michele Carter, Michele Geers, and Allyson "Sunny" Story, all teacher associates in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

They'll advise you to look for common sense, initiative, communications and prioritization skills, ability to "read" teachers and kids, and unabashed "enthusiasm and joy" over teaching and learning.

When Carter, a special education paraeducator at the preK-1 Grant Early Childhood Center, sits in on a para hiring interview, she probes to discover if the candidate "considers what we do a profession" and exhibits "respect for the teacher's position and the whole [teaching] environment."

If Carter, a 20-year master of her craft, sounds like one tough gatekeeper, in a very real sense she is. In 2000, she belonged to a team of education providers that helped the Iowa Department of Education draft core competence criteria for a law establishing a "multilevel voluntary licensing system" for paraeducators, in every level from "generalist" to "specialist."

Now, should they choose, Iowa districts and individual support profes-

"Our goals are to have teacher assistants earn a living wage, to make this a career choice, and to be able to attract talented people into this profession."

—Allyson "Sunny" Story, department chair, Cedar Rapids Organization of Teacher Associates

sionals can opt for para state certification, a document that proves "we know what we know," says Sunny Story, department chair of the Cedar Rapids Organization of Teacher Associates (CROTA), a unit of the Cedar Rapids Education Association (CREA).

Talk about good timing. The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, specifies that new paras hired after January 8, 2002, and working in a program supported with Title I funds must have completed at least two years of secondary study, or obtained an associ-

ate's (or higher) degree, or met a serious state "standard of quality" and demonstrated specific abilities through a state or local assessment.

Cedar Rapids, Iowa's second largest district, has put two laws together and added up the consequences—all newly hired paras will have to hold state certification.

That's progressive enough, but here's where it gets revolutionary: Through an eight-level salary scale negotiated with CROTA/CREA, Cedar Rapids systematically rewards its teacher associates for earning ever more credits, certificates, and degrees.

Each time a para moves from one skill level up to the next, he or she gets a 2.5 percent pay increase on his or her "individual" base salary. Those raises just keep compounding, and the para never hits the ceiling of some arbitrary "top" step or increment.

"This is called 'looping' and it's modeled after our teacher pay schedule" explains UniServ Director Kathy Krehbiel. "The potential for personal growth is enormous. You go as far as you want and you never stop. As long as you keep learning, you always get a pay increase."

As a result, these education support professionals are slowly but surely moving above fast-food pay. At press time, the lowest paid Cedar Rapids para made \$8.56 an hour, the highest, \$15.67.

"Our goals are to have teacher assistants earn a living wage, to make this a career choice, and to be able to attract talented people into this profession," stresses Story, a 23-year veteran and one of the first Iowans to earn state para certification. ✓

—Dave Winans

Cedar Rapids Paras: They Make a Difference

If you want to glimpse the future of para education, go to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, an industrial Midwestern city with a very industrious public school system. Its students outperform state and national averages in every category of the ACT test, and its dropout prevention program has produced a 98 percent graduation rate.

This success couldn't happen without a quality teaching force—assisted by paraeducators committed to kids and their own professional growth. Here are some paras you should meet:

- Even before Iowa passed its para certification law in 2000, early childhood paraeducator **Michele Carter** collaborated with the Grant Wood Area Education Agency and the Iowa Education Network to organize and teach paraprofessional workshops. Now (and she can't believe how quickly) Carter has earned a five-year state Special Needs para certificate at Kirkwood Community College.

In her work with preschoolers—with physical, emotional, and mental disabilities—at the Title I Grant Early Childhood Center, Carter has reached a professional high. She says her classroom partner, special ed teacher Emily Dolezal, “wants me to use what I have learned and is willing to take suggestions. That makes me comfortable and relaxed.”

“Emily does the planning—the IEPs, the behavior modification plans, the paperwork, the brainwork,” this para notes. “I assist in implementing her plans.”

“My duties include small group supervision and routine maintenance,” Carter adds. “Teachers have a difficult role, with added hours, and they have to take the job home with them. I can generally leave my job at the door when I leave each day.”

But thanks to her coursework, Carter shares the same vocabulary with Dolezal. “I used to say, ‘no, that’s not for me.’ Now I know what teachers are talking about,” says Carter. “And if you understand, you can have input. Now I can help adapt activities for special learning styles, so that all students are working at the skills table together.”

• **Lynn Bounds** is a dropout assistant in the day care center of

For Lynn Bounds, dropout prevention starts before these kids even enter kindergarten.

Metro High School, Cedar Rapids’ alternative setting for at-risk students, where she serves as “a ‘teacher,’ a nursemaid, and a counselor.”

It’s an important job—helping teach the preschool children of school staff and teenaged parents, while modeling parenting skills for moms and dads who are kids themselves. It’s all part of the school system’s philosophy that dropout prevention begins before children even hit kindergarten.

This teacher associate loves the small scale of Metro and the caring quality of her co-workers, and bursts with pride “over the trust kids have in me to take care of them and the trust parents have in me to do this.” Young parents “watch me, to see how I interact with two-year-olds,” Bounds adds. “If they have questions, we sit down and talk to them.”

Bounds knows her district’s growing commitment to para professional development can help make her an even stronger influence in young lives. And she’s ready—like many certified teachers, Bounds maintains a professional file with course completion certificates, staff evaluations, and even a “professional growth record.”

“I enjoy training—you can never get enough tools in your belt,” Bounds concludes. “I think training should be mandatory and the district should pay for it.”

- **Michele Geers** already held two tough jobs before taking on a third. She’s the mother of six public school students and a teacher associate at Hiawatha Elementary, where she does everything from work with a child with Asperger’s Syndrome to perform copying, lunchroom, and clinic duties. And more recently she became an Association activist.

Geers realizes she may be facing a *fourth* job, earning course credits to get state para certification, and she contemplates getting trained as a medical first responder and grief counselor. But this outspoken unionist knows that there are only so many hours in a day and that she and many of her ESP colleagues need some sort of relief to get the job training they deserve and need.

More paid in-service time “would make a lot of people happy,” Geers declares. And Central Office indicates that it hears this message—because more than one person is sending it.

“When we all pull together and speak with one voice, we make a huge difference,” Geers concludes. “You can’t beat the union; it has your back. The Association listens to what we say, gets things settled, and keeps us in constant contact with the latest district policies. You can’t go without health insurance, and you shouldn’t go without job insurance: your union.” ✓

—D.W.



Michele Geers, with student Jasmine Todora, says paras need “one voice.”



For Lynn Bounds, dropout prevention starts before these kids even enter kindergarten.

CREA: A Local That Makes a Difference

Teacher associates in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, are making strides in pay and professional development because they’re part of the Cedar Rapids Education Association, an inclusive NEA local affiliate that pushes the envelope.

These ESPs have an equal say with teachers in CREA governance, committee assignments, and relationships with administrators. And they’re benefiting from the local’s six years of collaborative work with the Cedar Rapids Community School District—in areas such as non-confrontational bargaining and problem solving, remediation for struggling educators, and, soon, professional development.

“Our work relationship with CREA is outstanding, unique, and enlightened,” enthuses district Human Relations Director Ann

Feldmann. “It takes both sides to give a little, and we get back so much.”

And how. Not long ago, the parties sat down and amicably headed off the deficit-driven “surplus”—layoffs—of more than 76 new teachers by negotiating “an enriched separation package” that enticed 114 veteran teachers to retire early.

The union and district then split the salary savings for needs such as budget relief, teacher and ESP salary increases, qualifications-based pay adjustments for veteran paras, and a skills-based salary schedule for teacher associates.

Paras and teachers in Cedar Rapids and across Iowa have another strong NEA affiliate “at their back”: the Iowa State Education

Association. “We’re working behind the scenes with the Iowa Department of Education as it prepares to implement the Elementary and Secondary Education Act,” reports ISEA staffer Lana Oppenheim Schlapkohl. “And we’re preparing to implement programs that help our para members achieve state certification, and working with DOE to offer assistance to pass *whatever* tests are required under ESEA.”

For more on how they do things in Cedar Rapids, contact CREA President Gary Anhalt at ganhalt@cr.k12.ia.us or CROTA Department Chair Sunny Story at astory@esc.cr.k12.ia.us. And visit this NEA local affiliate’s website at www.creaonline.org.

Taxing Times for Public Education

Your school system's fiscal woes are shared by other districts across the nation. Here's the bigger economic picture.

It can be pretty tough to believe the country has an education mandate at a time when there are teacher reductions in force (RIFs) in Massachusetts, Iowa, and Connecticut; position cuts and booming class sizes in Minnesota; and a decrease in school nurses and custodial substitutes in Alaska.

Factor in the unfunded federal and state mandates—to increase student test scores, ensure individual schools' "adequate yearly progress," and improve educator quality and "accountability"—and it's a wonder there's any money left for daily classroom needs.

A beginning-of-the-school-year *Christian Science Monitor* article bleakly reported that school finances across the nation are the worst in 10 years, causing cutbacks in everything from bands to bus stops. School systems in 44 states "have seen their money cut or held steady," the *Monitor* reported, "which essentially amounts to a cut when teacher raises are factored in."

This is a coast-to-coast crisis. In an annual state survey released in late August by the bipartisan National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), 43 states reported a collective \$27.3 billion budget gap in April, which shot up to \$35.9 billion by June.

In Fiscal Year 2002, reports NCSL, 29 states implemented targeted or across-the-board budget cuts, while 19 tapped their rainy day funds. And in Fiscal Year 2003, now under way, 11 states have cut K-12 education spending, while another 11 have slashed revenue sharing with local governments.

Worse yet, "this bad news will last awhile, even if the recession ends," says NEA Research economist Ed Hurley.

Other states made big pre-recession tax cuts or failed to create tax systems that keep pace with growing personal incomes.

• The stock market downturn.

"Personal incomes have not fallen dramatically," notes Hurley, "but in most states, revenues have been hurt by a capital gains tax loss—which one could call a capital gains *collapse*—and the devaluation of stock options." For

"This bad news will last awhile, even if the recession ends. Negative effects will stay around for at least the next two years."

—NEA economist Ed Hurley

"Negative effects will stay around for at least the next two years."

Some factors behind the longevity of this fiscal pain:

• **Boom-era fiscal errors.** Some states compounded their shortfalls by making optimistic revenue estimates that did not track economic reality.

California, Colorado, and New Jersey, the stock market stumble meant double-digit declines in estimated income tax payments for tax year 2001.

Public employee pension funds, which invest heavily in corporate stocks, also took a hit from the market downturn. "This may force states to increase pension contributions at a time when they can least afford it," Hurley warns.

• **Structural deficits.** Recessions are temporary phenomena, and states are currently dealing with their short-term deficits by raising taxes and cutting

Education on the Chopping Block

Projected Fiscal Year 2003 cutbacks in this sampling of hard-hit states constantly change—and not for the better. One common reason for fiscal shortfalls: Many state tax systems are poorly designed.

State	K-12 Cuts	Higher Ed Cuts	Estimated Budget Gaps FY 2002	Massachusetts	✓	✓	\$800 mil
Arizona		✓	\$850.7 mil	Minnesota		✓	\$439 mil
Arkansas	✓	✓	\$164.4 mil	Mississippi	✓	✓	\$200 mil
California	✓	✓	\$5.1 bil	Missouri		✓	\$520 mil
Colorado		✓	\$822 mil	Montana		✓	no shortfall
Delaware	✓	✓	no shortfall	New Jersey		✓	\$2.8 bil
Florida	✓	✓	\$1.3 bil	Ohio		✓	\$500 mil
Hawaii	✓	✓	\$150 mil	Oklahoma	✓	✓	\$284 mil
Idaho	✓	✓	\$155 mil	Oregon	✓	✓	\$940 mil
Illinois	✓	✓	\$804 mil	Pennsylvania	✓	✓	\$678 mil
Indiana	✓	✓	\$1.2 bil	South Carolina	✓	✓	\$442 mil
Iowa	✓	✓	\$200 mil	Tennessee	✓	✓	\$400 mil
Kentucky		✓	\$535 mil	Utah		✓	\$256.9 mil
Maryland		✓	\$415 mil	Vermont		✓	\$23 mil
				Virginia		✓	\$1.5 bil
				Washington	✓	✓	\$900 mil

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures, 2002



spending. But some states will continue to face "structural deficits" year after year because they lack a tax structure that captures enough revenue from economic growth to fund services at current levels. Other states have started down that road by "cutting their income tax in good times rather than saving the money in rainy day accounts," Hurley notes.

• **Skyrocketing medical costs.** Health care cost increases, particularly for prescription drugs, are not only impacting school employee salaries and contracts, they're also making a huge dent in state budgets.

According to the NCSL state survey, funding for Medicaid—the federal/state program providing medical and nursing home care for some 40 million low-income people—has "taken over the top spot for the last two years and will capture the largest percentage of new funding in FY 2003." With 40 states reporting, Medicaid is budgeted to grow 8.2 percent, outpacing K-12 education (4.8 percent), corrections (3.2 percent), and higher ed (1.8 percent).

How do we get out of this fiscal mess? Solutions will involve everything from true health care reform to a stable, balanced, and "elastic" tax system based on an economic development policy that doesn't trade off

adequate education funding for new business development (the two work together).

Just like any smart educator's investment portfolio, says Hurley, a balanced state tax system is structured for the highs, lows, and in-betweens of the economic cycle. Such a structure could include an income tax (a big revenue source in good economic times), a property tax (stable even during recessions), and a sales tax that covers a wide variety of services.

In the end, fair taxation and funding adequacy can make a difference in everything from class size to teacher retention and recruitment. ✓

—Dave Winans

For updates on state fiscal health, visit the websites of the National Association of State Budget Officers (www.nasbo.org) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (www.ncsl.org). For more on tax policy and public education funding, go to www.nea.org/neatoday/0203/news18.html. And for more on school funding adequacy, go to www.nea.org/neatoday/0209/news18.html.

Louisiana ESPs Organize, Parish by Parish by Parish

Look in Louisiana's northeastern corner, between Arkansas and the Mississippi River, and you'll find an inspiring ESP organizing story. It began in East Carroll Parish back in 1996 and has since spread to parishes such as Madison and Morehouse.

With assistance from NEA and the Louisiana Association of Educators, ESPs are learning how to press their case for better pay, benefits, and conditions with district decision makers—and learning how to prevail, even without a state bargaining law.

District by district, word is traveling that you can move mountains if you attend school board meetings en masse; make one-to-one contact with superintendents, school board, and finance committee members; and thoughtfully present your case for a living wage.

In the 2001-02 school year, Madison ESPs won a \$1,300 raise, added to a \$500 state raise. And at the end of September 2002, Morehouse support professionals gained a \$900 boost in their salary schedule, on top of the \$500 state raise.

Along the way, new activists and organizational habits are emerging. In

Morehouse Parish, Bonita Elementary food service technician Gertrude Johnson has become an energetic leader. Like clockwork, she and other support professionals now gather the first Thursday of each month, immediately after the school board meeting.

And thanks to NEA/LAE training, northeastern Louisiana ESPs are sharpening the skills needed in any "bargaining" situation—holding one's temper, staying focused, and concentrating on finer points such as job descriptions, evaluations, and performance.

Like the Mississippi itself, the organizing momentum just flows from one parish to the next, "one piece, one step at a time," reports LAE UniServ Director Eva Dyann Wilson.

"In the process," Wilson says, "education support professionals are coming to realize the power they have, even to meet finance committee members as equals. There's no stopping them!" ✓

—Dave Winans

For more on how ESP organizing started in East Carroll Parish, Louisiana, go to www.nea.org/neatoday/9902/atlocivl.html.

[KUDOS TO]

Nebraska Teacher Wins RIF Settlement, Recall Rights

• The **Nebraska State Education Association** has won a settlement and recall rights for rural teacher Pat Sharp, laid off after teaching 26 years in the 50-year-old Bethel Public School. The school was closed last spring because of a lean budget and declining enrollment.

Sharp, an NSEA member for most of her 33-year teaching career, requested a reduction in force hearing before her school board. "I felt I had put 26 years in there, and that was something to consider," she says.

The board agreed to a settlement on the day the hearing was scheduled. Sharp, who was represented by NSEA UniServ and legal staff, received \$10,000 and two-year recall rights should the school re-open. Sharp's teaching partner, who is not an Association member, received no assistance.

In a note to NSEA UniServ Director Bill Nowak, Sharp wrote:

"When it comes to this sort of situation, I have come to appreciate the backing of NSEA. We are really 'on an island,' and with your support, I have felt rescued."

• A couple of years back, **Kansas NEA** won legislation permitting school districts and community colleges to negotiate entry into the large Kansas State Employee Health Care Plan—plus an agreement with the plan's governing body that gives districts and colleges five years to "ramp up" to the plan's required employer share of premiums. At press time, some 20 of Kansas' 304 K-12 districts had succeeded in entering the state plan, with more on the way.

Before this opportunity arose, "each district—some with only 45 or so employees—had to go on its own to buy insurance," says Craig Grant, KNEA director of legislative action. "Districts could not form a large enough purchasing pool to provide decent rates. That especially hurt education support professionals, who often spend the majority of their salary on health insurance."

• After a long fight, the **South Plainfield (New Jersey) Education Association** has won \$721,144 in back pay and prospective step increases, effective September 1, for 22 teachers improperly placed on the salary guide. SPEA's battle—which moved from arbitration to the state appellate court and then back to arbitration—began in 1996 when it learned of six members hired without proper credit for previous teaching experience.

Finding that South Plainfield school board budget surpluses could cover an arbitration award without negatively affecting programs or staffing levels, arbitrator Mattye Gandel ordered placement of all SPEA members on the proper step of the salary guide and back pay awards for eligible current employees and retirees.

• Last June, members of the **St. Clair County (Alabama) Education Association** helped elect a new county superintendent of education, Tom Sanders. SCCEA teacher, ESP, and administrator members joined forces in the 300-strong St. Clair County Political Action Committee for Education, which purchased media spots, made phone contacts, campaigned door-to-door, and spoke to various groups on Sanders' behalf.

"I am very excited that the first candidate endorsed by SCC-PACE won," says local President Kathy Smith. "I would like to encourage other local Associations to form political action committees and become involved in the political process."



Laid-off Nebraska teacher Pat Sharp, here with students on her last field trip, feels "rescued" because of the work of her NEA state affiliate.

Al Koontz



Michelle Barbera

Should we play down varsity sports?

yes

Sitting on the bench for my team, I used to think, "Will the coach let me play?" I was good enough to make varsity, but not skilled enough to help win.

We won the championship three years running, but my memory of high school basketball isn't about winning, it's about playing the game I loved.

There are many athletes who, like me, long to play, but are not chosen for the real event. Varsity sports ensure that the best players play, while others who practice faithfully take a seat in the crunch to win.

Many coaches think they teach discipline, teamwork, and sportsmanship. I say children quickly learn "to win" from aggressive coaches who may be motivating and excellent teachers or belligerent tyrants. Modeling good character in a climate of competition is a skill many adults miss, sending mixed messages to impressionable youths.

In many districts, the teachers' union negotiates coaching stipends, but many coaches are not teachers, so there is little incentive to improve pay. This creates a revolving door of coaches with mixed ability and little connection to the school.

Player eligibility rules vary across districts, forcing some athletes out and inviting abuses from those coaches who would overlook grades to let athletes compete.

Even with rules to deter recruiting, the best athletes seem to find the best programs regardless of proof of residency, making it easy to predict who will win before a season starts.

Athletic directors rely on gate receipts from football and basketball, which draw crowds, to balance their budgets. Other sports are often underfunded. No varsity athlete should have to worry about paying for a uniform.

School districts should review how their sports programs are operated because abuses and unequal treatment are common.

My best sports experience was playing field hockey for Michigan State under Coach Betty Drobach. She believed in each player, encouraged us through mistakes, and pushed our confidence to try for higher goals on and off the field. Varsity sports can be like that, if it's not all about winning. ✓



JUDITH DAWSON is a physical education teacher at Southwestern Academy, a public school in Flint, Michigan. She has taught for 31 years and coached swimming and basketball. She is a masters synchronized swimmer and a master gardener.

no

Varsity sports played a very important role in my daughter Natalie's life, as well as my son Matthew's. Because of their involvement, both learned to be more responsible and manage their time wisely. They set goals for themselves and realized firsthand that meeting those goals demanded a great deal of time, sacrifice, and initiative. Through constant practice and training, they learned to improve themselves and acquired a diligent work ethic that has, to this day, become a cornerstone in their ability to succeed. Further, they learned to work well with others and have come to realize that winning or losing is more than a final score. They have learned to be true sportsmen, experiencing, proudly, the wonders of winning and, humbly, the perils of defeat.

Varsity sports are not only important to the athletes. They are vital to the whole student body, faculty, and community. I cannot imagine what our high schools or our society would be like without pep rallies, bonfires, homecoming, or championship games. Varsity sports unite families with common interests and give friends and neighbors the opportunity to participate in school spirit.

I can remember taking Natalie around to local business owners in our community, asking them to place ads in the football and basketball programs. How eager they were to support the teams and have their business ads in all the programs for the season!

Tailgate parties, after field hockey games, brought families and friends together to support the team and have fun.

Varsity sports are competitive. The mission is to get the athletes to work hard, improve their skills and *win*. For the most part, bad coaches are rare, and athletes are motivated to excel by their participation. The harsh reality is that life isn't fair. To get anywhere takes hard work. Varsity sports prepares young people for life's challenges. Playing the better players is part of life, as is promoting the stellar employee.

I agree that the organization of varsity sports needs improvement, but I do not agree that down-playing varsity sports is the best means to that end. ✓



MARIANNE SIMPSON is in her sixth year as Educational Technology Contact at Battlefield Elementary School in Spotsylvania, Virginia. She maintains the computers and instructs students in using programs.

What's Your Opinion?

Should we play down varsity sports?

To vote, visit our website at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should teachers have students correct each others' papers?

The tally on this Debate from the last issue of *NEA Today*:
55% Yes 45% No

Should standardized tests be used to hold educators responsible for student achievement?

To write for this Debate, send a brief note to Alain Jehlen, ajehlen@nea.org.

Ringling in the Parents

Urban League President Hugh B. Price sounds a call for school activism.

The question of how to inspire parents to become energetic partners in their children's education has never rendered easy answers. Hugh B. Price, president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League, has given the subject a lot of thought. Father of three children, Yale Law School graduate, journalist, and a former vice-president of the Rockefeller Foundation, Price has written a book that is as much a parent guide as a call to community activism. Marilyn Milloy of NEA Today recently talked to Price about the book, *Achievement Matters: Getting Your Child the Best Education (Dafina)*, and about the collaborative role of parents, educators, and community leaders in helping children—particularly the urban poor—succeed.

The Urban League reaches into every area of African-American life. Why this special focus on education?

My interest in education is longstanding. It started when I mentored kids who had been referred from the Juvenile Court when I was in law school. I wrote a lot about education while on the editorial board at the *New York Times*, and I was very involved with the topic at the Rockefeller Foundation. So I was determined to get the League to focus heavily on education. We're the oldest and largest community-based movement empowering African-Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream. That journey to the mainstream starts with education.

Your message is directed first to parents. Why?

We can't afford to have our children be ambivalent about academic achievement. The world places a premium on academic preparation, and if we don't understand the value of it, we're in deep trouble, and our young people will be in deep trouble. The more we help parents understand what they should do—what they're quite capable of doing—the more that lightens the load on teachers, enabling them to do what they should do and are capable of doing.

What are you saying to parents?

A lot of it is as simple as all the obvious stuff: Read to your kids, let them see reading material around, talk to them about what they see, be mindful of your tone and about television—a very pernicious influence if children overdose on it. I also talk about navigating the system at school—sitting down and talking with the teachers

about what's likely to happen during the course of a school year, what their children are supposed to know, what they can do to help.

In many cases this interaction never happens. What can educators do?

I think a lot of it starts with the teachers emitting a signal that they really want it and welcome it—and not being judgmental about the parents who do come in for information. If we want genuine partnership, the tone has got to be right. A school has to send off vibes that it really believes in the children and in their possibilities.

What if the vibes are welcoming, but to no positive end?

It's a struggle, and I don't have any illusions about that. But we have to think outside the box. I think it would be very good for schools to call in the pastors and heads of groups like the Eastern Star, the Elks, the Masons, and the fraternities, and say, "Our parents belong to your organizations, your institutions. Could we sit down and talk about some of these things, and what you can do in your monthly meetings? We need you in this." If the ministers, for example, would proclaim from the pulpit that they're going to make sure that every child in church becomes a good reader, it would happen. I think you've got to keep looking for creative ways to get the engagement—going to where parents are.

What happens when the parents respond, but their children don't because of the 'stigma of achievement' you talk about?

The entire community has to send a message. The Urban League launched the Campaign for African-American Achievement to try to counteract that stigma, and we decided to fly right into the eye of the storm. We've discovered that you really can turn children's attitudes around if you organize communities to recognize kids for doing the right thing. So every year for the last five years, during the month of September, we've staged block parties, street festivals, and parades in cities across the country to recognize kids who are striving to do well. We've had close to 300,000 youngsters come to our events.

We also launched a National Achiever's Society and have inducted over 25,000 children into it. I call it our National Achievement Gang, because we have rituals, we have regalia, we have a credo, and we have colors. I've even designed a jacket. And if you ever go to one of those induction ceremonies, it's powerful what happens.

So community boosterism is key?

I think that in addition to everything that the schools have got to do, and in addition to everything I believe parents can do—and should—communities really should have these kinds of blow-out celebrations of kids. I told New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg that I would love to see an Achievement Day parade down 5th Avenue for all the kids who've gotten B averages or better, and for their teachers and their



Scott Suchman

Hugh B. Price says parents and communities are critical to helping children succeed in school.

parents. I'd love to see a parade down Constitution Avenue in Washington, down Michigan Avenue in Chicago. Because the signal that would send to the kids about what's important would be very, very powerful. And it would not just be an event that lasts for three hours. There would be all the build-up, all the coverage. And the more exciting and affirming we make it, the more kids are likely to say, "I want to be in that parade. This is cool."

Are you optimistic parents will get on board in ways like this?

If there were no examples of parents who are put upon, exhausted, and raising children on their own, but who nonetheless are succeeding in paying attention to education, I'd say it was hopeless. But there are plenty of examples. And it starts with will. Truth is, we all have to muster the will. Parents and caregivers. Community leaders and organizations. School boards, which often aren't focused on this issue at all. Politicians, who set policy and are responsible for appropriations.

The kids are waiting for us. ✓

Bargain Play

Students learn the lessons of labor by 'becoming' workers, employers.

High school students are now bargaining for seniority, medical benefits, and even higher wages. Well, sort of.

They're participating in a program created seven years ago by two Los Angeles teachers and now being expanded nationwide by the George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Silver Spring, Maryland. Called the Collective Bargaining Education Project, its showcase component is a day-long simulation in which students assume the roles of workers and employers.

Funded with public and private dollars, the project seeks to close a critical gap in high school learning—labor history, workers' rights, and social justice. And by all accounts, it's working.

"Many teacher activists see a big hole in the curriculum regarding working people," says project coordinator Valerie Ervin. "Since it's not there, we need to put it there. Teachers are crying out for innovation."

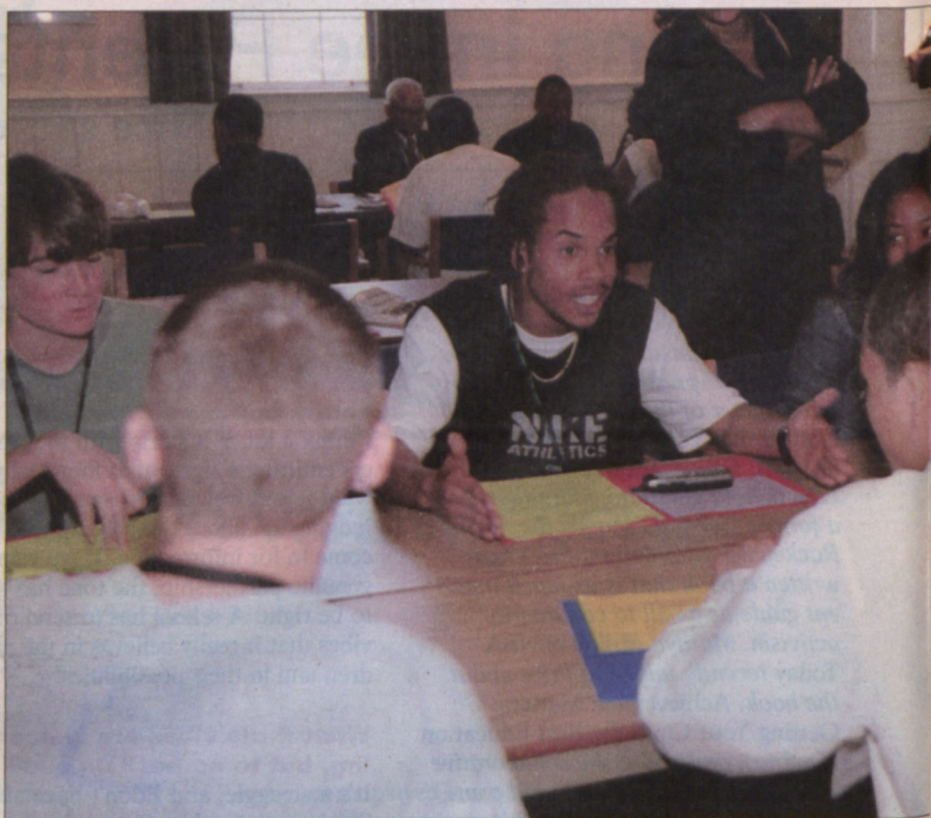
And so with guidance from "coaches"—real-life labor and management personnel along with mediators—students spend most of a day crafting a contract for employees of imaginary "Getwell Hospital." Meanwhile, their teachers learn how to weave labor issues into a social studies and history curriculum.

During one recent simulation involving 120 students from Maryland high schools, teachers marveled at how

quickly students took to playing their roles—and how much they learned. "It got very intense," said Joann Malone, a teacher at Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring. "Some groups resolved things easily. Others wouldn't give up and had to get a mediator."

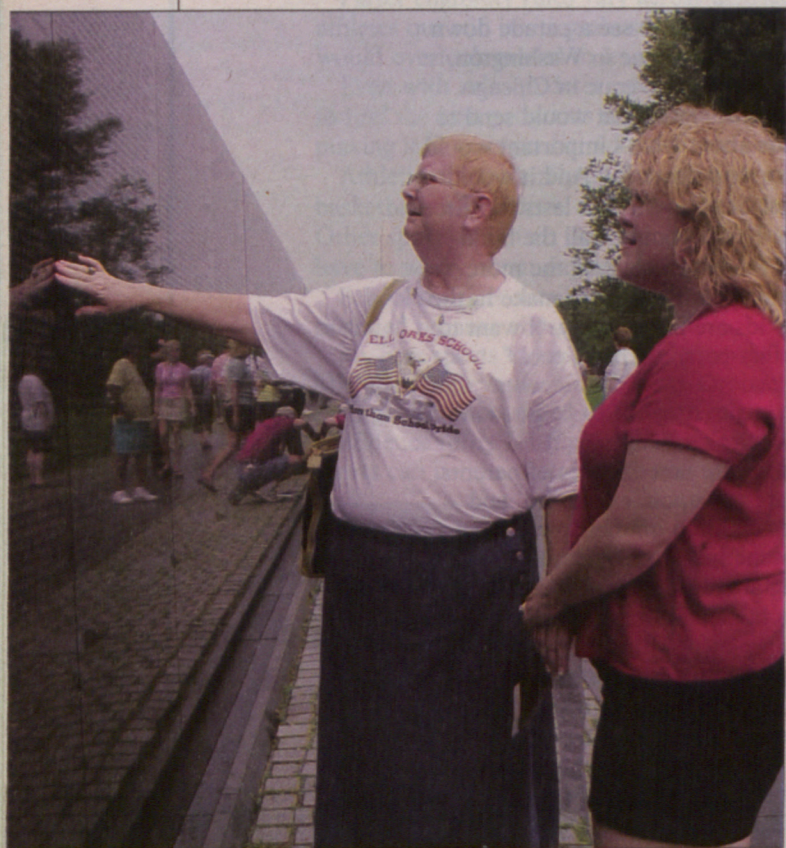
The Meany Center began the project 18 months ago, modeling it after the Los Angeles effort created by teachers Patti Litwin and Linda Tubach. Said Malone, "It's so hands-on—just outstanding."

For more: E-mail Valerie Ervin at vervin@georgemeany.org or call 301/431-5413.



High school students in Maryland play the roles of workers and employers as they negotiate a labor contract for "Getwell Hospital."

Charles Votaw



Connie Wilke (left) and Melissa Heady visit the Vietnam Memorial Wall during a summer teach-in about the war.

Sandy Schaeffer

Lessons of Vietnam

As long as they can remember, teachers Melissa Heady and Connie Wilke have been intrigued by the Vietnam War. Heady's father and father-in-law served in the war and Wilke remembers young men from her hometown who died fighting. This summer, both got a chance to nurture their interest at the first ever Teach Vietnam Teachers Network conference in Washington, D.C.

The experience, they say, was one of the richest—and most emotional—they've ever had.

Sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation (VVMF), the four-day conference marked the 20th anniversary commemoration of the Vietnam Memorial Wall and kicked off what the foundation says will be an annual effort to help teachers preserve war history in schools. Some 90 teachers participated.

"We wanted to give teachers the resources to teach multiple perspectives about the war," says Tricia Edwards, director of Teach Vietnam. So they tapped the expertise of everybody from historians to Vietnam veterans.

Heady, who heads the history department at East Jessamine High School in Nicholasville, Kentucky, said the talks by the soldiers were particularly riveting. She has long guided her students through oral history projects on the war. Now, she says, she'll use the Virtual Wall and other Internet resources offered by VVMF to "transport that emotional element into my classroom."

Wilke, a fifth-grade teacher at Bell Oaks Upper Elementary School in Bellmawr, New Jersey, had facilitated student chats with local veterans and spearheaded a successful \$6,000 project to build a war monument in her schoolyard. Now she plans to have students interview families of local young men who died. "My hope is that my students will be able to say these were not just names, but people who played Little League and did the same things they do," says Wilke.

—Lauren Fischer

For more: Contact Tricia Edwards at tedwards@vvmf.org or visit www.teachvietnam.org.

Celebrating Self—Creatively

Students at James A. Shanks High School in Quincy, Florida, are no strangers to academic struggle. Most are poor or come from broken homes, and many have special education needs.

But teacher Tammy Williams-Hinson says she refuses to see deficits when she comes to school. "I tell my students every day they are fantastic and striving to be fabulous," she says. And then she gets them pumped up for learning, mainly by turning her English classes into laboratories for self-discovery and fun.

Her activities have packed a lot of punch—and gotten notice, too. In the last two years she's won Innovation and Fine Arts Grants from The NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education and has been a star to her mostly African-American students.

The reason: Williams-Hinson says traditional ways of developing reading and writing skills don't always resonate with her students. So she aggressively mines topics, such as the Harlem Renaissance and the Jazz Age, that not only inspire personal pride but can be brought alive with music, art, and other hands-on projects.

So far her biggest success has been with the African-American cultural celebration, Kwanzaa, which she uses to teach everything from writing and computer skills to Kwanzaa principles, like purpose and unity. "The seven principles of Kwanzaa sum up what it takes to be a quality citizen," she says, "and through fostering a communal environment I allow my students to be themselves."

The 28-year-old teacher—she was Gadsden County's youngest ever District Teacher of the Year—uses literature and film about Kwanzaa to develop reading and thinking skills tied to state achievement standards. She guides students through desktop publishing projects, helping them develop T-shirts, flyers, banners, Power Point presentations, and a website related to the schoolwide "Kwanzaa Extravaganza" that is her final, showcase event. She also gets parents and grandparents to teach students how to sew and make a Kwanzaa quilt. Now a Kwanzaa CD-ROM—and a field trip to an African-American arts festival in Atlanta—are in the works.

"I want to give my students a hands-on, different approach to learning so they won't get stuck," says Williams-Hinson. "I want to give them learning that goes beyond what they are getting at home. They deserve it."

—Leah Lakins

For more: Contact Williams-Hinson at twchinadoll@aol.com. Apply today for a grant from The NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education at www.nfie.org.



Mark Waltheiser

Tammy Williams-Hinson uses the African-American cultural celebration Kwanzaa to help her students get excited about reading and writing—and school in general.

And Now at a Computer Near You...

NEA members can reap new rewards at a portal designed just for them.

Heard rumors of an owl sighting? This time, believe it.

OWL.org, NEA's long-awaited portal for members, launched in August, and already more than 12,000 NEA stalwarts have registered.

The main draw, say planners, is the portal's capacity to link NEA members with each other through discussion boards and chat rooms and help them focus on issues they really care about.

"We really want to create a community—a place our members can engage in lively conversations to benefit their personal classroom experiences," says Lynn Coffin, director of communications for OWL.org.

Coffin acknowledges there have been bumps along the way—the portal has been two years in the making—but so far "we've had some fabulous feedback."

In addition to the discussion boards, the portal offers access to lesson plans and teaching tips. It gives member discounts for online professional development courses and for other goodies such as clothes and

books. It also gives a heads-up to members about upcoming PBS education programs and offers a quick link to job placement services.

But what really excites, says Coffin, is the portal's potential. Unlike www.nea.org, the NEA website geared mainly to the public and press, OWL.org offers state NEA leaders the chance to tailor content to fit the special needs of NEA members in each state. Local legislative matters, political advocacy efforts, conference information, state ESP news, even reports and resources that may have been too costly to post on local and state websites—all can be posted to the portal in ways that uniquely serve state members. Coffin calls the portal a "strategic resource" states can use for accomplishing key goals.

George King, director of communications for the Illinois Education Association, says members there understand the portal is a work in progress and are "really enthused" by its promise.

Of course, getting every NEA member on board—not to mention working out the technological kinks that come with such new ventures—"won't happen overnight," notes Coffin. But, she says, "it's a very exciting process."

—Marilyn Milloy

Want to register? Go to www.owl.org, click on "register" and follow the steps. If you have comments or questions, contact Lynn Coffin at lcoffin@nea.org.



OWL.org, the newly launched portal for NEA members, gives teachers and staff a special way to learn about and discuss issues uniquely theirs.

Photos by Ray Tanaka/Photoplant



Left: Hawaiian native Aaron Meyer enjoyed exchanging techniques for teaching culturally diverse classes with other program participants.

Right: Thanks to the new teacher support program, Maile Yasui still teaches in Leeward six years later.

Capturing the Spirit of Aloha

Hawaii program turns cultural traditions into classroom strategies.

Like many new teachers in Hawaii, Maile Yasui started her career in Leeward, the state's largest school division, on the coast of Oahu. Unlike many of her predecessors, Yasui still teaches in the district six years later, thanks to a support program organized by the Leeward Education Association.

Joan Lewis, a former LEA president, initiated the program in 1995. That year almost half of the local's 2,000 members either retired or left the school district. Lewis wanted to create a support system for the incoming new teachers.

But she also wanted the project to equip them with the strategies they needed to teach in the district. Leeward, like other Hawaiian school systems, recruits heavily from the mainland United States. Many recruits are unfamiliar with the cultural traditions of the coastal community, which is 90 percent native Hawaiian, Lewis says.

"We were struggling with what to do with these new teachers," says Lewis, cur-

rently vice president of the Hawaii State Teachers Association. "We knew there was a high level of burnout. The culture is not necessarily what they think they are getting when they interview, and we wanted to do something to keep our teachers with us."

The program encourages teachers to incorporate local traditions, such as song, dance, artwork, and storytelling, into their classes to stimulate students' individual learning styles. A sample lesson might involve sharing food with students to create class unity and build on the connection between food and family. Other lessons let students work in small groups to help them connect to each other and to what they are learning. Studies have shown that Hawaiian children respond better when they have an opportunity to learn from their peers.

During the semester-long class, co-sponsored by the Hawaii Department of Education and University of Hawaii, participants refine their strategies and network with other beginning teachers. At the end, they receive four professional development credits, which allow them to advance on the district's salary schedule. About 30 to 40 new teachers enroll each semester.

"The program was good at helping you adjust to the school

system, especially if you had never been in it," says Yasui, a sixth-grade teacher at Momilani Elementary School. "The networking helped us get over the challenges quicker. We all felt connected and everyone was willing to help one another."

Advisors recommend incorporating the native Hawaiian language and local history into lessons as well. Other suggested classroom strategies include using hands-on activities, visual aids, poetry, and humor.

"It's not necessarily that native Hawaiian children have to be taught differently from other students, but teachers need to understand their history and where they come from," Lewis says. "These strategies work well with all students."

Leeward recruits about 300

Two-Minute Tips

Personalized Plates

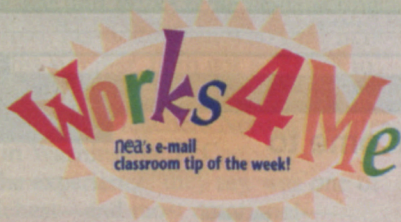
I give my students an assignment to describe themselves in eight or fewer letters and/or numbers. Then I give them a license plate template and tell them to create a personal plate that best describes themselves. They decorate their plates and explain why their choice of letters or numbers suits them. I post the plates around the room so they can see what their classmates say about themselves. The license plates are a hit at parent open houses.

Sue Schmitt
Antioch, Illinois

Time-Saving Tip

It can be difficult getting students who cannot yet read a clock to resource classes or early buses on time. I recently replaced a dual alarm clock at my house and took the old one to school. I set the alarm time and the students are responsible for setting specific alarm times each day as a reminder for the day's activities. It has worked so well that I bought a triple function alarm clock with a radio, buzzer, and nature sounds for the other settings.

Jeanette Newquist
Tulare, California



Have a great idea? You can pass along your tip to NEA Today's 2.7 million readers in one of five ways:

- By mail: NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- By phone: 202/822-7201
- By fax: 202/822-7206
- By e-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org
- Through the Web: www.nea.org/neatoday

new teachers each year, says UniServ Director Georgiana Alvaro. Those who complete the training generally remain in the district and the state longer, often assuming leadership positions in the Association, she says.

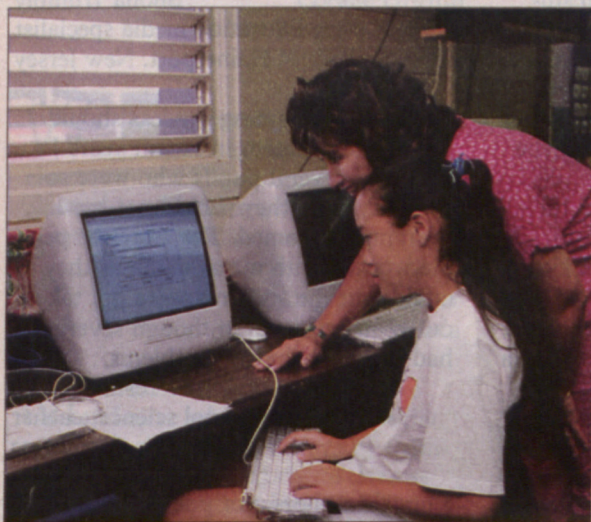
Aaron Meyer, a fifth-grade teacher at Salt Lake Elementary School, appreciated the classroom management tips covered in the course. He also enjoyed talking with other beginning teachers.

"Sometimes you get so caught up with just yourself and your classroom that you don't have time to discuss things with other teachers," says Meyer, now in his third year of teaching. "The socializing alone was well worth the experience of being in the class."

Lewis, of HSTA, says the program owes much of its success to its partnerships.

"We've used everybody's strengths to the fullest," she says. "And we're helping teachers tap into their own strengths as well." ✓

—Kristen Loschert



RESOURCES

Wise Up

Looking for a place to talk with other teachers? Then check out www.owl.org, the new Association Internet portal. Register at the site to gain exclusive access to lesson plans, discussion boards, and information on certification, licensure, and jobs in education. Sign up to receive classroom tips by e-mail each week or to receive discounts on online courses and tutorials, offered through NEA partners. Stay on top of your profession at OWL.org.

Online Pen Pals

Connect your students with students overseas at www.epals.com. More than four million teachers and students take part in the ePALS program, which unites people from 191 countries through discussion boards, chat rooms, projects, and ePALS events. The site offers instant translation to overcome language barriers between participants. You'll find projects for different age groups and resources for incorporating the program into your lessons. The site also has a section called "Teacher Talk" where teachers can post messages, discuss classroom material, and apply for mentors.

Connecting with Families

Healthy relationships between parents, students, and teachers are important, and a visit to www.education.com/home/index.jsp will help you strengthen those bonds. The site offers tips for connecting with students' families, maintaining regular contact with parents, and setting clear goals for parent-teacher conferences. Visitors can register to receive field trip tips, homework help, educational activities, and free clip art.

Nobody Ever Told Me

The Great Snake Chase

My first year of teaching, I taught a large class of fifth graders. Early one morning I came into my classroom and was surprised to see a group of boys gathered around my desk. I greeted them cheerfully and then pulled out my chair.

As I went to sit down I saw—to my horror—a huge snake coiled up on my chair. Without thinking, I started screaming and began to run. The boys picked up the snake and chased me as I ran across the hall to another teacher's classroom. She was not there. So, with my students close behind me, I ran furiously up the hall toward the library.

When I reached the library door I tried unsuccessfully to open it. It was then that I felt something heavy around my shoulders.

The boys had draped the large snake over my shoulders and around my neck. They were hooting and having a great time. I felt that I would pass out from fright. I learned a valuable lesson that day that has stayed with me through 15 years of teaching: Maintain a good poker face!

Barbara Beckstrom
Fourth-grade teacher
St. George, Utah

Got a Story?

E-mail kloschert@nea.org.

[DILEMMA]

What do you do if a student has a crush on you?

The best medicine is prevention. I keep crushes from getting out of hand by talking openly about my family. I don't spend a lot of class time on my personal life, just enough for my students to know I am a real person and that I have a life of my own. I have seen these methods avert possible uncomfortable moments for both myself and my students.

Lisa Lillywhite Lonsdale
Junior high school teacher
Salt Lake City, Utah

■ If a student has a crush on a teacher, the teacher should have the student talk to the school counselor and ask that the student be removed from the class. Inform the parents of the situation and have the administration document it

to protect the teacher from possible future conflicts.

Ahmed Elgammal
Bilingual teacher
Macomb, Michigan

■ Sit down with the student in the presence of a counselor or administrator and point out the inappropriateness of the situation. Explain about community perceptions and how you need to protect the student's good standing and yours in that community. You must be gentle in your delivery but firm in your meaning. Conclude your meeting with a smile and a sincere handshake.

Al Tucciarone
Technology teacher
Salem, Ohio

■ I remind students that although I may look their age, I am the teacher and there are clear boundaries that never will be crossed. I've also found my friends are helpful. Other teachers stop by to ensure I'm not alone with a student (thereby avoiding possible awkward moments), and I stop by their classrooms as well.

Heidi Bowman
Language arts teacher
Riverside, California

Got an answer?

How do you get your class back on task after lunch?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@list.nea.org. Or send by regular mail, or fax to 202/822-7206. Include your name, city, state, and job. If published, you will receive an NEA Today mug!



Ted Pitts

If I Wrote the Special Education Law...

Better IDEAs from frontline educators.

This year, Congress is rewriting the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal special education law that has a major impact on most classrooms. NEA

Today asked NEA members what they would do if revising IDEA were up to them.



Mike Heffner

"Hold students responsible for their actions," says Virginia paraeducator Veryl Hines (above).

"The federal forms should be the only paperwork," says Utah teacher Ross Rogers (right).

I would force each Congressperson to be a first-year teacher in a high priority school for 30 days without a mentor or adequate resources but with the goal of leaving no child behind.

Jacqueline Henry
Third-grade teacher
Stone Mountain, Georgia

The federal forms should be the only paperwork. States and districts should not be allowed to add more. Many state and district forms duplicate what's on the federal forms.

The teacher's main purpose is to teach, not do paperwork. Resource teachers are very valuable to classroom teachers like me, and we're losing them because they're overloaded and burned out by the paperwork.

Ross Rogers
Third-grade teacher
Davis, Utah

We should hold special education students responsible for their actions, such as fighting and possession of weapons.

Many special education kids feel they are beyond reproach. They need to know they are going to be accountable. We need to let them know that even though they have disabilities, they still can distinguish right from wrong.

We have consequences in society for breaking the law. In school, we need to prepare them for that.

We had one special education student who got in trouble outside school, shot someone, and later hanged himself in jail. If we reached them earlier in school, and let them know society is not going to slap them on the wrist, maybe we could prevent that.

We have an alternative school for regular education kids who get in trouble, but not for special education kids.

Veryl Hines
Special education paraeducator
Portsmouth, Virginia

We should have classes for parents on parenting and child development. Parents need to know what is normal development so that they can better understand whether their youngster has a problem or not. I know one mother who was nervous when her child didn't walk until 13 months, even though that's normal.

We should also have chat groups for parents where they can share ideas over coffee, maybe once a month, if we can get them to come in to the school. Parents with AD/HD kids can share their strategies, for example.

Muriel Softli
School nurse
Seattle, Washington

Let's be realistic about what parents, students, and educators can accomplish. We are losing students because of high-stakes tests with standards that are too high.

We have state tests in grades four, seven, and ten. The students ask why they should stay in school when the state continues to tell them they aren't meeting the norms.

These tests don't show the confidence the student has gained during the year, or the growth that is developmentally appropriate for that student. The tests are defeating to students who have made great gains but not met the state standards.

Karle Warren
Fifth-grade teacher
Clarkston, Washington

I would emphasize funding. So many students with learning problems end up in prison. It would be less expensive—both in dollars and in personal value—to meet their needs earlier.

Paula Haehnel
Elementary special education teacher
Sharon, Pennsylvania

We should seriously think about the impact on non-special education students and be sure they are getting their fair education, too.

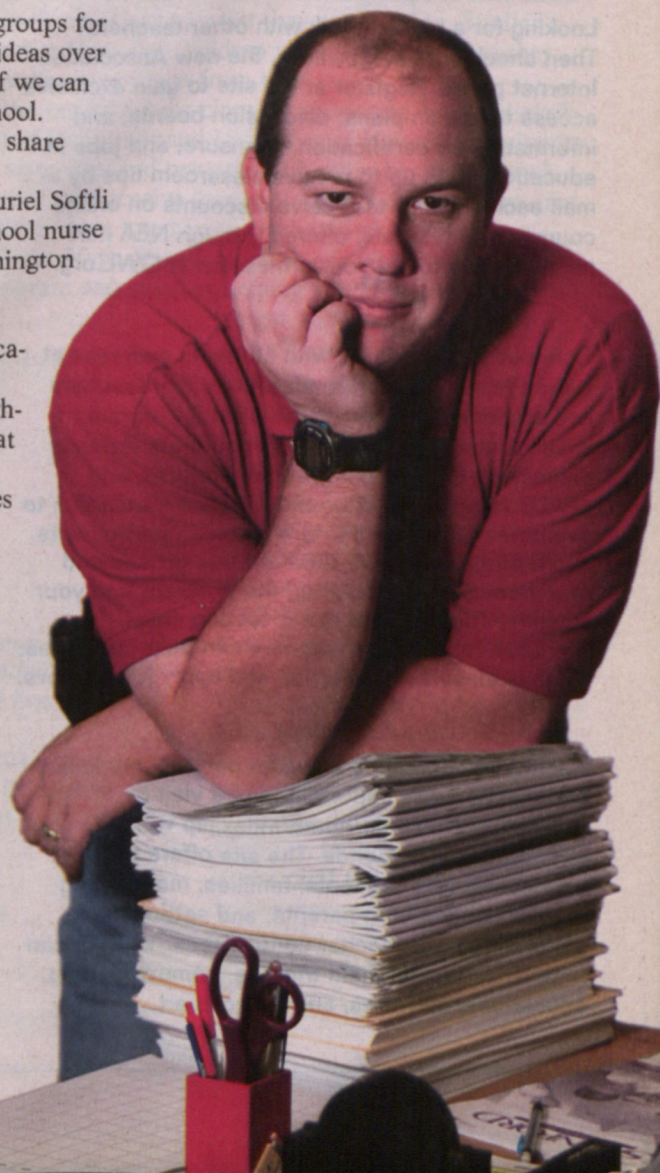
Shona Trumbly
Education media specialist
Hainesport, New Jersey

The mainstreaming process should be re-evaluated. In recent years I have had several pupils who were so dysfunctional, they should not have been mainstreamed. The resource people worked with me as much as they could, but the students were not taken out of my class, even though several had serious behavior problems.

Florestine Evans
High school science teacher
Memphis, Tennessee

Local teachers, not policy mandates, should be able to determine what is best for each child.

As teachers, we are trained to meet the unique learning needs of each child.



Steve Wilson

We are sensitive to their individual situations, and we can determine the best way for them to learn. This involves a combination of teacher intuition, creativity, and patience. Sometimes I have to sneak education through the back door.

Mandates are often unrealistic—and unfunded—goals set for all children, regardless of their truly special needs.

Debby Dundas
Sixth-grade teacher
Winnebago, Minnesota

We should limit inclusion to academically able children and create age group classes (for example, 12- to 14-year-olds) for children not able to keep up academically and mainstream them in non-academic classes.

Coralie Griffith
NEA Student Program member
Norfolk, Virginia

We should provide money for training of regular education classroom teachers in serving the special needs child in specific subject areas—social studies, science, etc.

Judy Holland
Eighth-grade teacher
Buchanan, Virginia

My classroom was more creative and alive when I had my special education students in a class by themselves. They perceived themselves as accepted by the rest of the class, and no one made fun of them. They would say and do things in my room that would be unheard of today because no one wants to be noticed as different.

Some today do not even try doing the assignments because they fear someone will notice that they are not at the same level as their classmates.

I do all in my power to shield them and encourage them, but to no avail. I miss the laughter and the teasing between my “special students” and myself.

Maybe change in big ways is not always the best way.

Don Brothers
Middle school art teacher
Delphi, Indiana

\$\$\$! Any other business would be bankrupted if they made policy decisions without fully funding the policy.

Cathy Paredes
Sixth-grade teacher
Tucson, Arizona

Leave it alone—we still have not completely implemented the last rewrite.

Dave Santee
Special education teacher
Leavenworth, Kansas

For more: It's not too late to make a difference. E-mail NEA's Patti Ralabate (pralabate@nea.org) or Kim Anderson (kianderson@nea.org) to help NEA's efforts to improve IDEA. Or, go to NEA's Legislative Action Center at www.nea.org/lac.

[DILEMMA]

How do you keep your lesson plans from getting stale?

After a unit, I ask the students how, if they had been the teacher, they would have taught it differently. I get some good ideas.

Sara Marquardt
High school English teacher
Berlin, Wisconsin

I don't keep lesson plans from year to year. When I'm ready to teach a unit, I pretest my kids on the objectives to find their strengths and weaknesses. Then I develop a timeline for presenting material and accomplishing objectives. I create “mini” lesson plans for each day, which I write in my planning book (in case I'm observed!). I keep these books, but I never go back and use them except for reference. My theory is, if I'm excited about what I'm teaching, that enthusiasm will pass to the students.

Meredith Schwartz
Middle school reading specialist
Ellicott City, Maryland

I take advantage of the many workshops offered by my local and county Associations through the UniServ program. One in particular, “Instructional Strategies,” offers many useful ideas applicable immediately in the classroom.

Gloria Louis
Second-grade teacher
Passaic, New Jersey

I research the topic further and find learning “hooks” to start the lesson. Examples: Use puppets to explain concepts (Phoo-phoo the physics mouse?), look for current events links, have an interesting object that connects with the topic, tell a story about your experience with the topic, poll the class about their opinions, use as many corny puns and jokes about the lesson as possible.

Joan Franze
Elementary gifted education teacher
Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

Relax! Go with the strengths and weaknesses of each class. I have given myself permission to loosely fluctuate within a lesson framework. Like many high school teachers with multiple classes of the same subject, I generally strive to keep them all on the same schedule, just to keep my sanity! Lately, I've discovered each class has its own personality. Rather than pushing students to stay on schedule, I trust my instincts to follow



Ted Pitts

those unique, teachable moments. Classes still cover the material within a few days of each other, and no two lessons are the same!

Janis Tischer
High school English teacher
Minooka, Illinois

One of the best ways is to incorporate technology to bring in current information and encourage students to interact with the subject matter. This helps students learn how to use information. Technology can make your lessons come alive.

As a technology coach, I have found that helping teachers integrate technology into their teaching also revives the teacher. Visit our school's technology integration journey at www.wcschools.com/mjhs/tlcf.

Diane Bennett,
High school technology coach
Mt. Juliet, Tennessee

When lesson plans get stale, it is typically because the teacher is doing the work, and loses sight of the student perspective. Try recording student comments during a lesson you've taught several times. Often, you'll discover new questions and difficulties of which you weren't aware.

Leanna Aker
Junior high science teacher
Federal Way, Washington

Got an Answer?

How do you cool off in a high-stress situation?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@list.nea.org. Or send by regular mail, or fax to 202/822-7206. Include your name, city, state, and job title. If published, you will receive an NEA Today mug!

“Real Teachers. . . care enough to work for peanuts, but aren't going to put up with the funding circus forever!”

— Kathy Saxon, language arts and social studies teacher, Seattle, Washington

**ANY KID WILL TELL YOU...
THE MORE COLORS YOU HAVE,
THE BETTER.**



Every child can succeed, and their success is America's future. That's why the NEA and our partners are working together for excellence in every public school. We're fighting for quality teachers, safe and modern schools, early childhood education, lifting up low-performing

schools, reducing drop-out rates, and increasing the resources needed to help all children achieve. From classrooms to communities to capitals – parents, teachers and community leaders, side by side, can put greatness within every child's reach.

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NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
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Turning Teens Into Tutors

Pat Heck's reading and mentoring club helps students discover their love for literacy.

Fifteen years ago, veteran high school teacher Pat Heck was looking for a way to engage her reading recovery students when an activity with her advanced students sparked an idea. "I had organized a community service outing in which my advanced students read to elementary students at a nearby school," recalls Heck, who teaches at Red Mountain High in Phoenix, Arizona. There was just one problem: The session didn't turn out the way she'd expected—at all.

The students, normally confident in their interactions in class and with each other, were surprisingly hesitant to read to the small children. "I realized that the students needed training in how to read aloud and explain stories—skills that I had taken for granted as a reading teacher," says Heck.

Once Heck created a method for reading with the young children, the students quickly responded. Heck took notice. "If my advanced students responded this well," she thought, "just imagine what would happen with my struggling readers."

So Heck began to create a reading and mentoring club that connected her students to the local chapter of Reading is Fundamental (RIF), a national literacy organization. "That's how Club RIF and our Reading Buddies project was born," she says.

In Reading Buddies, Club RIF members read one-on-one to second graders at nearby Salk Elementary

School. "It's been a joy to see these students work hard at teaching children that pure wonderment comes from reading," says Heck. "Both the student and young buddy often improve."

Today, Club RIF boasts 1,800 members and offers students a variety of activities, from tutoring to collecting books for homeless shelters and students in low-income neighborhoods.

"Club RIF makes coming to school enjoyable and fun," says senior Erika Ortiz. "The service we provide to the children in our community is tremendously worthwhile. I intend to be part of RIF for the rest of my life."

For Heck, the words are like music. "I'm always amazed at how impassioned many high school students become about the importance of fighting illiteracy and fostering a lifelong love of reading," she says.

But success hasn't always been easy. "For my struggling readers, there was much more at stake, and I desperately wanted them to experience success," says Heck. "Many were not read to as children. I figured if they could teach second graders the love of reading, perhaps they would learn it as well."

Heck worked closely with all of her students, helping them learn to develop questions, guide their young readers, and even create activities. The hard work paid off. Many students credit the club with their new outlook on their futures.

"So many of my club members have received scholarships and others have gone on to create tutoring projects of their own," says Heck. Even the national Reading is Fundamental program has taken note.

"There's an old saying," Heck says. "If you want to learn something, teach it. My reading students took that lesson to heart and rekindled their joy of reading by sharing it with others. That's what makes me proud." ✓

—Anita Merina



Photos by John Miller



High school senior Erika Ortiz (above left) reads to Regan Danis, 5, in a tutoring session sponsored by Club RIF, the brainchild of NEA member Pat Heck (left).

You Can Do It, Too!

If you're interested in creating a Club RIF of your own, more power to you, says Red Mountain's Pat Heck. Here are her tips for success:

Contact the national Reading is Fundamental, Inc., one of NEA's partners in Read Across America. RIF can help you with materials, local contacts, and suggestions on how to start a Club RIF in your area. Go to www.rif.org.

Approach each RIF event like a coach. Make sure all of the details are in place before you launch your project, and make sure each player knows exactly what is expected of him or her.

Think small at first. Create a tutoring project for one class, not five. Make it manageable and build a solid foundation.

Make sure you organize. Few students are naturally adept at effective organizing, but they are very responsive to directions. Include your students in the planning and they'll be more invested in the project's success.

Make local contacts to help you with your programs. Work with local homeless shelters, Indian reservations, and other organizations for book distributions. Be creative; it makes a big difference to work with the community.

Enjoy the experience. Your students surely will—and that's the key.

Read Across America All Year Long

Ready for a literary treasure hunt? CyberSafari and NEA's Read Across America have teamed up to offer three different Internet reading challenges to celebrate literacy and build reading skills. The treasure hunts, one each for elementary, middle, and high school students and teachers, will feature clues and riddles. Players can sign up individually or as a school or family team. For details, go to www.nea.org/readacross. To go directly to the contest, go to www.cybersafari.org. The more clues solved, the better the chances of winning great prizes.



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Putting a Filter on the Internet

Dear Web Editor,

Our district technology coordinator told me that my classroom access to the Internet is "filtered" because of a state mandate. Is this true? And what exactly does "filtered" mean?

Filtering software blocks attempts of Internet users to access illegal or offensive webpages. Sites that contain violent content, information about

crime, and/or sexually explicit or drug-related material may be considered inappropriate for general viewing and blocked by the filter. Internet filtering lets schools manage the type of Web content their students can access, and each school or district has different standards. An effective Internet filter should be flexible enough to accommodate the dynamic nature of the Web and the unique needs of each district.

At the most basic level, Internet filtering products function like traffic cops and bouncers. They match the address of a requested webpage—also called a URL—against a list of webpage addresses stored in a database. If the page's URL appears in the database, then the user will be unable to access the page. The quality of the software's database and the processes used to maintain it are the most important factors to consider when selecting a filtering provider or product.

It is inaccurate to assert that your state requires your school to use an Internet filter. In fact, your school could choose not to implement filtering measures. Most likely, your school has filtered Internet access because the district believes it is in the best interest of your students' safety.

Some federal legislation ties school technology funding to the use of Internet filters. Both the No Child Left Behind Act (Title II-D) and the E-Rate provision of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 require schools and libraries to implement the following measures before they can participate in either program:

- Adopt an Internet safety policy;
- Convene, in some cases, at least one public meeting to prepare the Internet safety policy; and
- Use a technology protection measure that blocks or filters Internet access.

Dear Web Editor,

Is there any way to determine whether a student has taken information from the Internet for an assignment

and not credited the proper source? Are there any public websites that can help educators detect plagiarism?

Unfortunately, increased student access to the Internet has added a new twist to the old "art" of plagiarism. Incredibly, a large number of young students don't understand what plagiarism is. They do not realize it is wrong to take content from the Internet and submit it as original work.

The best method for detecting plagiarism, though, is *not* software-based, but pedagogy-based. Teachers must help students understand what plagiarism is and make sure they understand the consequences for taking credit for work that is not their own.

You can help prevent plagiarism by providing students with a structured research process that focuses on the goals of the course. Offer opportunities that allow students to reflect personally on the topic of a writing assignment and avoid putting students in a time crunch. Most importantly, know your students' writing styles.

There are many websites that offer guidance on plagiarism. Check out Coastal Carolina University's "Cheating 101: Paper Mills and You" at www.coastal.edu/library/papermil.htm. You also may want to read "Internet Plagiarism: Strategies to Deter Academic Misconduct" by Mary Hricko, library director at Kent State University, at www.mtsu.edu/~itconf/proceed98/mhricko.html.

TALK TO US

Have a nifty classroom tip or lesson plan that uses technology? E-mail a description (under 200 words, please!) to wiredclassroom@list.nea.org.

Is there a website, CD-ROM, or piece of software you can't live without? E-mail your favorites—and why you love them—to myfavoritetech@list.nea.org.

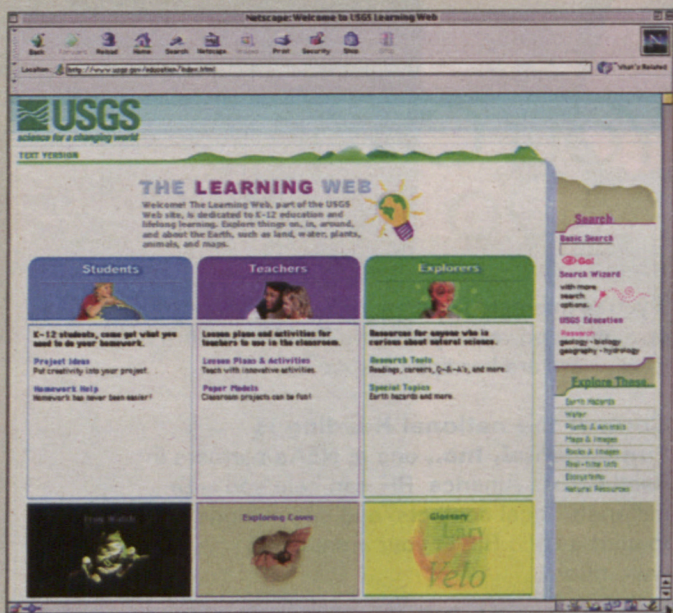
Or send your responses by regular mail to *NEA Today*, by fax to 202/822-7206, or through the Web at www.nea.org/cet.

Those published here will receive a sparkling *NEA Today* mug!

Editor's Pick

The Learning Web

The U.S. Geological Survey of the U.S. Department of the Interior has a terrific education site called The Learning Web at www.usgs.gov/education/index.html. The site includes lessons and activities for life and earth science, geography, and geology classes. Some of the topics covered include fossils, ecosystems, rocks, volcanoes, and maps. Students and teachers will find project ideas, homework help, research tools, and resources on the site. All of the USGS teaching packets are based on national education standards.



Techno Tips

Classical Music Site

I worked with a highly skilled parent to develop a classical music website for my class. The site, www.belmont.net/belmont/laroche, includes student drawings and stories inspired by musical pieces, information pages for parents, learning activities, a photo album, and a class movie. I also collaborated with parents and an outstanding Web master to create the First Grade Friendship Rain Forest Website at www.belmont.k12.ma.us/winnbrook/rainforest. The site includes student artwork and research, learning activities, photos and stories from family trips, and Web resources.

Donna LaRoche
First-grade teacher
Belmont, Massachusetts

Excel Sign-In Sheet

I use a Microsoft® Excel® spreadsheet to create a class sign-in document. As my students enter the classroom, they record their lunch and dismissal plans for the day on this sheet. The spreadsheet includes a column for each lunch choice, and students simply type their lunch selections under the correct column next to their names.

In the last column students type their bus numbers, pick-up arrangements, or the name of their after-school programs. Once everyone signs in, I print a copy of the sheet and tape it to the wall next to my desk.

Karen Roahrig
Fifth-grade teacher
Versailles, Kentucky

U.S. History Trek

At www.ustrek.org students and teachers can follow a group of eight educators as they travel across the United States visiting historic places and history experts. Teachers can access photos, videos, and information about the trip at the website. The group has aligned the trip itinerary with a typical yearlong U.S. History curriculum. The team visits unusual locations and brings to life the often-overlooked parts of history (such as the contributions of women and minorities). The team's reports are well written and interesting for high school students. I love this site!

Sarah Jaeger
Mentor teacher
Ross, California

Yearly Progress—or Else

The prescription for closing the achievement gap is tough—and causing plenty of worry.

Few provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001 (ESEA) are causing as much angst as the ones requiring states to bring every student to “proficiency” in 12 years. To do this, states must now establish “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) targets for schools to meet that are tougher than those under the 1994 ESEA. Missing these targets could mean stiff sanctions. The requirements have states rattled; some are still scrambling to come up with accountability plans. We sort through the confusion.

Why did Congress toughen the requirements for adequate yearly progress in the first place?

Lawmakers felt states had abused the flexibility they’d been given in setting and meeting annual targets under the old ESEA. Under that law, Title I schools only had to make progress as defined by the states, and often with no set deadlines, so the results varied wildly. Ironically, states that had set high standards now look bad. Of the nearly 9,000 schools the Department of Education this summer announced had not met their targets, some 1,500 came from Michigan—which had set tough goals—while none came from Wyoming and Arkansas, which had less rigorous goals.

So what’s different now?

Starting in the 2002-03 school year, every state must give tests in reading and math at least once between grades 3-5, grades 6-9, and grades 10-12. In 2005-06, tests must be given annually for every grade between 3-8 and once between grades 10-12. These test results will be the primary measure for AYP.

Exactly how does a state set its AYP targets?

Using test data from the 2001-02 school year, states must first set a baseline, or starting point. The formula for doing this is complicated—states can use test results from the lowest-performing students, or they can use school proficiency rankings. The end result, however, will be this: A large number of students in each state—at least one-fifth—will, by law, start off in schools whose scores are below the baseline. These schools will have at most two years to raise their scores to that baseline. To ensure these students, and all others, make steady progress, a state must raise its achievement bar in equal increments for the next 12 years. The first increase must be in 2004-05 and then at least once every three years.

How does a school know it has reached its target?

For many, this is the scary part.

Schools are only considered successful in making their AYP target when each of four specified subgroups in a school—not simply the student population as a whole—meets the same target. That means test results for students with disabilities, major racial and ethnic minorities, economically disadvantaged students, and students with limited English proficiency will all be broken out separately and measured against the same target as the test results for the school as a whole.

What was the thinking behind this?

Lawmakers wanted to make sure that schools did not mask the performance of lower-achieving students—or allow schools to focus on higher-achieving students and neglect the more challenged groups.

What’s so bad about that?

The big fear is that if even one subgroup fails to make the target in math or reading, the whole school will be identified as needing improvement. That means thousands of schools that make their targets overall—or make them for all but one of the subgroups—could still be subjected to sanctions. State leaders have predicted that more than 60 percent of schools in this country could be subject to penalty within a few years because of this provision.

The law does carry a so-called “safe harbor” clause to help schools that miss their targets for one or two subgroups, but most experts don’t believe it will offer much relief.

Is there flexibility anywhere?

The flexibility lies in an obscure, but important, provision that allows individual states to determine how many students will be in a subgroup for the results to be “statistically reliable.” Depending on whether that number is, say, 10 or 50, the ramifications are huge. If a state sets the number at 50, for example, and 30 percent of the schools in the state don’t have that many kids in a subgroup, then those schools don’t have to break out test results and will be far less vulnerable to

missing their AYP targets. This provision is sure to stir up controversy down the road. Already some states are talking about setting high numbers to help minimize failure rates. That’s why NEA

strongly encourages members to keep tabs on who’s setting this number and how they come up with it.

What happens to a school that misses its targets?

If a school fails to make AYP for two consecutive years, it becomes classified as “needing improvement” and must develop a two-year improvement plan and get help from the district. Each student in that school will get the option of transferring to a better public school in the district. In each subsequent year of needing improvement, the penalties get progressively tougher until finally, after four years of missing AYP targets, a school is identified for restructuring. ✓

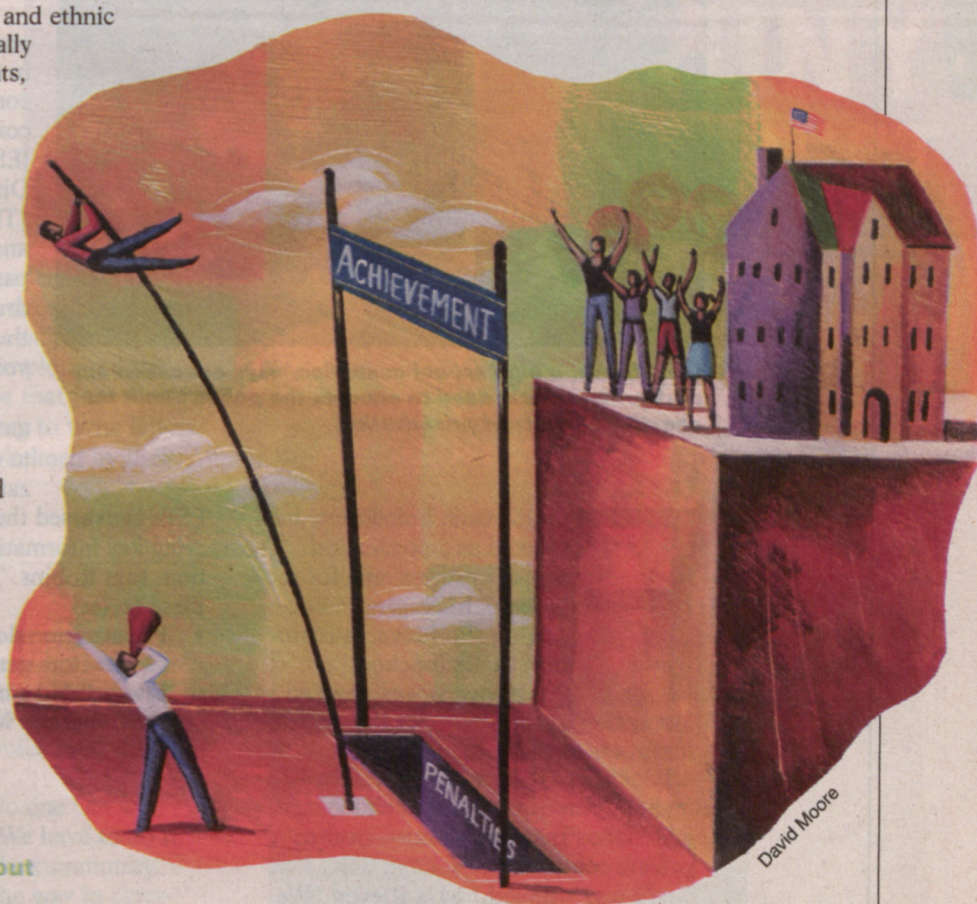
—Marilyn Milloy

For more on AYP:

• Call NEA’s ESEA hotline, 866/373-ESEA (3732).

• See official guidelines at the Department of Education’s website, www.nochildleftbehind.gov.

• Read “No state left behind: The challenges and opportunities of the ESEA 2001” by the Education Commission of the States at www.ecs.org.



Just Protect Students

Michigan ESPs fight privatization plan.

Robert Chase



Lois Riever, a high school custodian, says education support professionals need to educate the public about the negative impacts of privatization.

For 23 years, Lois Riever has worked as an education support professional for the Jackson, Michigan, public schools. So Riever, a custodian at High School Alternatives, was shocked last spring to learn that her job might disappear as part of a plan by the school board to turn 200 ESP jobs—including transportation, maintenance, and skilled trades positions—over to private contractors.

"I was stunned," says Riever. "We all were. I think the school board timed the announcement because school was about to let out for the summer, and they thought no one would care too much. They were wrong."

Indeed, Jackson ESPs, who belong to the Jackson Educators Support Personnel Association, acted quickly to

oppose the privatization plan and to educate the community about the dangers of privatization.

"Education support professionals are in a unique position to communicate with the community," says JESPA UniServ Director Pat Robins. "They grow up with and live among the parents whose children they serve, and they are a trusted voice."

Before school board members met in June to discuss the privatization plan, Jackson

ESPs canvassed the community, delivering key information about privatization, says Robins. They highlighted these facts:

- Privatization does not save money. Contractors get in the door with low-ball bids, but quickly increase their charges. Meanwhile, local job

loss means less money going into the community.

- Private contractors are not accountable to the school board or the community. When privatization comes in, essentials such as employee background checks and education and training for public school employees disappear.
- Private contractors have no incentive to provide quality service to children. Because making money is the bottom line for contractors, the real incentive is to reduce or cut services.

Jackson bus driver Manfred Costello sees the drawbacks of privatization from both the parent and school employee points of view. Costello and his wife have adopted eight special-needs children, so they work closely with the district's support professionals, he says.

"My wife and I had to build trusting relationships with every school employee who comes into contact with our children, from the bus driver to the teacher's aide to the custodian. The parents of the kids I drive build that same relationship with me."



JESPA members and community supporters picket the Jackson school board meeting.

JESPA

Going the Extra Mile

Prepared for Political Action

As the first ESP member to serve on the Tennessee Education Association's Tennessee Political Action Committee, **Christine Denton** is laser-focused on this month's election. Denton, an elementary media aide from Clarksville, helps decide which political candidates to recommend for member support. Denton recently completed the first year of her three-year term on the state committee.

"I hope it shows other ESPs they can go as far in the Association as they want to," she says.

Shortly after Denton joined the Clarksville/Montgomery County Education Association three years ago, the local president designated her as the affiliate's representative for ESP members. Fellow members then encouraged Denton to run for her district's spot on the state's political action committee. Denton secured her seat on the committee during an election held at Tennessee's Representative Assembly.

"There are a lot of people who don't join the Association because they don't feel the Association can do anything for ESPs," Denton says. "This shows them the

Association is here for everybody, every ESP and every teacher."

Bus Drivers Focus on Safety

New Jersey bus drivers are now better prepared to deal with potential terrorist-related crises, thanks to training they received from the Toms River Transportation Association (TRTA).

TRTA organized a workshop, with help from the Toms River Transportation Department and the Dover Township Police, that addressed ways school bus drivers should handle violent or life-threatening situa-

[PROFILE]

Helping After Hurricane Floyd

Name: Bill Snow
Job Title: Maintenance mechanic-carpenter, Neshaminy School District, Neshaminy, Pennsylvania

What I Do in My Job: I remodel bathrooms and offices. Most importantly, I upgrade classrooms.

The Most Rewarding Part of My Job: I enjoy it all.

Why I Do What I Do: I prefer it over daily maintenance, like fixing locks. I really enjoy the benefits of the job. I used to do construction, but this school district and job have better benefits.

My Favorite Pastime: Camping. I go down to the shore every weekend.

My Community Involvement Includes: After Hurricane Floyd hit in 1999, many people in the area lost their

houses. There was devastating damage. I worked to put people's houses back together. Neshaminy is on a creek, so many of my employees were out of luck. Many didn't have flood insurance. I personally worked with electricians, plumbers, and other people to make the necessary repairs. People were really grateful. I was nominated for Employee of the Year for Pennsylvania that year. People were more than willing to write letters for that. I was overwhelmed by their gratitude. ✓

Costello says. "If a kid isn't at the bus stop in the morning, I go back to see if he or she was late. If a parent doesn't meet a kid at the door, I don't leave until I know the child is safe. Believe me, no subcontractor ever went back to look for a kid who missed the bus."

So far, the Jackson ESPs have had great success winning community support. They go door-to-door to talk to parents and wear T-shirts with the slogan "Just Protect Students" so people will stop them to ask about the privatization issue.

When the school board met to discuss its privatization plan, 450 community members attended the meeting to voice their opposition. About 250 people walked a picket line outside the meeting, and more than 700 people signed a petition opposing privatization.

tions. The session included tips for reducing the chance for violence on and around school buses and for defusing volatile situations between students. About 250 transportation employees attended the workshop.

"The most important thing is that we must protect ourselves so that we can protect these kids," says TRTA President Grace Kelliher.

Wisconsin ESPs Build Tech Skills
 The Hartford Support Association in Wisconsin has used a \$3,000 NEA ESP

"But the fight's not over," says Robins. "The school board is still planning to accept bids from contractors. We've got to make sure the community continues to raise its voice until the board listens."

Costello agrees. "No one can win this for us," he says. "We have to do it. We live here. We are the community. And we need to lead the way in carrying the message that this community does not want privatization."

Riever thinks school workers in every district can learn from what the Jackson ESPs have experienced.

"You have to make the public understand the reality of privatization," she says. "And no one can do that as well as we can." ✓

—Matt Simon

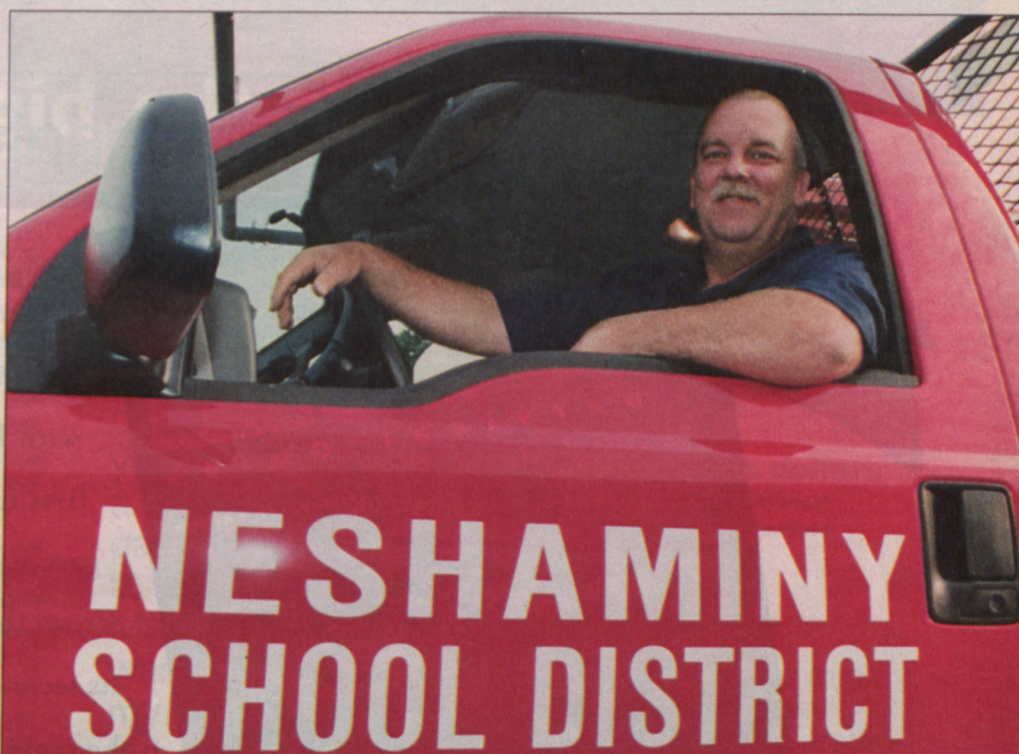
For more: E-mail Pat Robins at probins@mea.org.

Technology Grant to upgrade its staff development program. The local purchased two laptop computers and tutorials that ESP members can take home to practice their computer skills.

Consequently, members no longer have to wait until the end of the school day to use school computer facilities, says **Sue Hoefs**, co-president of HSA.

The additional computer skills will help ESP members advance in their jobs, Hoefs says.

For more on grant opportunities, see www.nea.org/esp/espnea/techgrmt.htm.



Rachelle Omenson

RESOURCES

Health on the Job

Do you need information about health and safety on the job? Check out the Labor Occupational Health Program at the University of California at Berkeley. This community outreach program offers information, publications, and training on collective bargaining, construction safety, ergonomics issues, lead-safe schools, workers' compensation, and other health and safety issues. Many LOHP publications also are available online. For more information call 510/642-5507 or visit <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~lohp/>.

School Transportation News

School Transportation News is a monthly news and feature magazine about school bus safety issues. You can access it online at www.stnonline.com/stn/index.shtml. The website features breaking news, industry information, and an online library that includes historical documents, legislative developments, and state and federal regulations. Visitors to the site also can sign up to receive weekly e-mail updates.

American Lung Association

Occupational lung disease is the number one work-related illness in the United States, according to the American Lung Association. Learn how to protect yourself by visiting the groups' website at www.lungusa.org/. You'll find information about working safely with chemicals and solvents, proper ventilation, potential workplace breathing hazards, and asthma. Be sure to check out the Lung Association's 2002 report *Trends in Air Quality*.

What's the big IDEA?



That's just what thousands of classroom teachers have asked since the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was first introduced. You asked for help, and we gave it to you with *The IDEA Survival Guide* from the NEA Professional Library. Now in its second printing, the revised edition follows the same easy question-and-answer format and leads you through a number of scenarios to address your most pressing concerns. In straightforward, reader-friendly language, this book demystifies IDEA by:

- clarifying what the law actually says;
- correcting myths and misinformation about what IDEA mandates;
- showing you how to actively participate in developing your students' programs;
- offering creative recommendations on dealing with difficult situations;
- suggesting how school teams can develop innovative programs to meet student needs; and finally,
- leading you to additional resources.

You'll get practical advice on dealing with discipline, developing Individualized Education Programs, communicating with parents, and more. Get the tools you need to be an effective advocate for your students, your team, and yourself.

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Staying on the Right Financial Track

Q: I'm a single mom who will retire in 10 to 13 years. I pay into the state retirement fund but have no other investments. My house will be paid off this fall, freeing up about \$1,200 a month that I could save. I have no debt, but I'd like to trade in my car in the next few years and pay cash for the difference. Do you have any suggestions?

A: Congratulations. You are doing a wonderful job managing your money. Paying off your mortgage, getting out of debt, and contributing to the retirement fund are excellent building blocks.

I wonder how much you will have to pay in cash when you trade in your car. It might help to start with estimating that. You should definitely tuck that \$1,200 away every month. But where you put it will depend on how much you need for your new car.

If you save the money for two years, that's \$28,800 plus whatever interest you earn. I would start conservatively. To invest your money, you need a time horizon of at least three years (five is better). Short timers don't belong in stocks or stock mutual funds, because you need time to ride out the ups and downs.

But that doesn't give you an excuse to delay putting money away. You might choose a money market fund at one of the large no-load

mutual fund companies (no-load funds come from fund groups that do not charge commissions). A money market fund keeps a stable price of \$1 per share and pays interest on your principal, much like a bank account, though it is not guaranteed. However, your interest from a money market fund is a little bit higher; you can write a check on the account when you buy your new car, and you can get your feet wet as an investor.

Once you've accumulated some money in the money market fund—say after six months—you might consider having \$100 per month of that money invested in a conservative balanced fund, which invests in both stocks and bonds.

Because interest rates are low now, many people think it's foolish to save. That's silly. I think you're doing the right things to ensure your future.

Q: I recently accepted a teaching position in a lower-income community. Do I qualify to have my student loans repaid by the school or the government?

A: Teachers working full time in low-income and subject-matter shortage areas may qualify for cancellation or deferment of some or all of their federal student loan debt.

Up to \$5,000 of Stafford loans and 100 percent of Perkins loans may be "forgiven." Specific provisions apply regarding loan origination dates, consecutive years of service, and teaching of specific subjects. For Stafford loan cancellation, you must have completed five consecutive years of service. For Perkins loans, you get a specific percentage break on your loan debt for each

year of service. Find the details at www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/Students/repayment/teachers.

Q: I am a 55-year-old widower with 27 years left to pay on a \$55,000 mortgage. I'll be eligible to retire at age 65. My credit union wants me to pay off my debts by taking out a second mortgage for \$82,000 at 6.95 percent with a \$935 monthly payment for 10 years. Is the interest on this loan tax-deductible? What should I do?

A: You need to get a little more information. It sounds like the credit union would roll your mortgage along with whatever other debts you have into one mortgage loan to be paid off in 10 years.

If that is the case, the interest would be tax-deductible, and the plan makes sense because you could be free of debt at retirement. A lot depends, though, on your spending habits. If you run up more credit card bills over the next 10 years, you will not have accomplished much. Do not charge more than you can pay off each month. Also, ask the credit union if the loan will be a mortgage qualified for tax deductibility.

Mary Rowland is an author and contributor to several financial planning magazines. E-mail your personal finance questions to MoneyQuestions@neamb.com.



No NEA dues dollars are ever used to develop or promote NEA Member Benefits programs.

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

The holiday season is fast approaching, so it's a great time to check out money-saving gifts for family and friends available through NEA Member Benefits.

Family members can "get connected" with great wireless phones and service from NEA Cellular. Pick a phone from manufacturers like Nokia, Ericsson, and Motorola, and popular plans from service providers such as AT&T, Cingular, and T-Mobile. Your phone is free with your members-only rebate. Plus, for signing up you get a free cellular telephone accessory pack, which includes an in-car charger, hands-free kit, and belt clip.

To find out about plans in your area or to place an order, go to www.neamb.com. Or call NEA Cellular toll free, 866/327-2219. Orders are shipped within 24 hours at no cost to you!

Encourage loved ones to read more with a gift subscription to one or more magazines. The NEA Magazine Servicesm offers fantastic rates—up to 80 percent off newsstand prices—for subscriptions to more than 500 titles such as *Time* and *Sports Illustrated*. Just go to www.neamb.com or call 800/YOURMAG to order.

Visiting out-of-town friends and family during the holidays? Save wear-and-tear on your own vehicle by taking advantage of great rates through the NEA Car Rental Programsm. Both Hertz and Alamo offer members-only discounts on all types of vehicles. It's easy to book a reservation online at www.neamb.com. Or call Hertz at 800/654-2200 and mention Code 50655, or Alamo at 800/354-2322, Code 613575, and Rate Code BY.

Happy Holidays!

Thrifty Educator

This month's tips come from Robert K. Nulf, a special education teacher in Battle Creek, Michigan, and Rhoda London, Teacher of the Gifted, Jacksonville, Florida.

Nulf: Sometimes to get what you need for your classroom requires creative acquisition. This past summer, my class acquired two new corporate sponsors. I received five boxes of varsity football jerseys from Michigan State University to give to students of the month, and PETCO

is donating an iguana and products and experts to teach students about the care and management of animals for our class. The iguana will receive a lot of attention from the kids, and in the meantime, we will sneak in a lot of living skills when they are not watching.

London: My elementary students often get out games and discover that playing pieces are missing. They also design games and make up review questions on various

topics, and there are never enough of these student-created playing pieces to go around.

My solution? When I throw away old dried-up markers, I save the lids! They are small, flat, come in different colors, and work perfectly as game pieces.

Got an idea?

If you have a suggestion for how your colleagues can save money at school, send it along to neatoday@nea.org.

Making the Connection

Helping students feel good about their school—and themselves—takes work. But the payoff can be rewarding.

Educators have long known that students achieve better when they have a healthy bond with their school community. Now some studies are confirming it, but with even better news.

It turns out that students who feel connected with their schools are less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors, such as drug use, violence, and early sex. One survey, the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health, found that students in small schools do even better in this regard. Another study—of a Washington state elementary school program designed

to improve social interactions and academic success—tracked students through high school graduation and found significantly reduced rates of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

J. David Hawkins, Ph.D., head of the University of Washington Social Development Research Group, says the outcome signals that when students have positive relationships at school, they are less likely to engage in behaviors that endanger those relationships or “put their futures at risk.”

Teachers and staff are the critical link to helping kids feel good about their lives at school. “What goes on in the classroom is key to keeping kids from becoming disenchanted with school,” says Robert Blum, M.D., Ph.D., author of the Longitudinal Study, and director of the University of Minnesota’s Center for Adolescent Health and Development. “It doesn’t matter whether you have 20 or 30 kids in a class, or whether the teacher has a graduate degree,” Blum says. “What matters is the environment the student enters when he walks through the classroom door.”

How do you make that environment as nourishing and affirming as possible? Angela Oddone, M.S.W., NEA Health Information Network’s mental wellness program coordinator, offers some tips:

Call the parents or caregivers of your students early in the year. This will set a cooperative tone and increase the likelihood that your interactions with them—and ultimately your students—will be positive.

Institute Monday morning meetings. “Monday mornings tend to be difficult for students,” says Oddone. Regular meetings offer a forum for them to talk about their weekend and anything that could affect the week ahead.

Compliment your students.

“This doesn’t always have to be for getting the right answer or doing well on a test,” says Oddone. “Give them positive feedback on the way they collaborated on a project, the great way they divided up the work, how they managed the connections with each other. The things we applaud should not always be the result of the work, but how they got there.”

Encourage students to engage in school-based activities.

This can be the typical extracurricular stuff, but not always. In one middle school, every student has a school job, whether it’s stacking books in the library or delivering messages to the office.

Model appropriate behavior.

“If you want students to feel connected, you have to be connectable,” says Oddone. “We shouldn’t turn away from a student without conveying that we recognize what they’re feeling, because we can leave them feeling diminished.”

Give students opportunities to relate to peers of different backgrounds. Include diversity topics in class meetings, but don’t overreach. If a student has lost a loved one and that student is Jewish, for example, use that opportunity to talk about what a Jewish funeral is like, says Oddone. Invite students to bring their culture to the classroom and allow them to talk about it.

Communicate your high expectations. “What you’re doing is connecting with the capable part of the student, not the part that has low self-esteem,” says Oddone. “This lets them know you believe they can—and that’s healthy.” ✓

—Paul Sathrum

NEA Health Information Network

What's Up at HIN?

NEA Health Information Network

■ BREAST CANCER SURVIVORS CAUCUS

NEA-HIN congratulates the 2002-03 officers of the NEA Cancer Survivors and Supporters Caucus, elected at the Representative Assembly in Dallas: President—Jeannie Lane, Kentucky; Vice President—Sandy Raymond, Maryland; Secretary—Callie Waldrop, Alabama; and Treasurer—Sharon White, Washington. For more information on Caucus membership, e-mail neacssc@aol.com.

■ NEW RESILIENCY TRAINING PACKAGE

With support from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, HIN recently launched a new training package to help educators promote resilience in

schools. The package features HIN’s *Stress Reduction Guide for Teachers and Other School Staff*, an accompanying stress self-assessment, and two presentations that illustrate resilience in action. To download the package, visit the mental health section of www.neahin.org.

■ THE RYAN WHITE HIV EDUCATION AWARD

Congratulations to Phil Carlson of Florida, the 2002 recipient of NEA-HIN’s Ryan White HIV Education Award. Phil was presented the award at the 2002 NEA Representative Assembly’s Gay and Lesbian Caucus Dinner for his tireless efforts to prevent HIV/AIDS in schools and communities—and for making

schools safer for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered students and staff.

■ SOUTH CAROLINA CAN WE TALK

Can We Talk?—a program that helps parents talk with children about healthy relationships and sexuality—is flourishing in South Carolina under the leadership of Kelli Kenison and Dan Jepson. They have mobilized an enthusiastic group of facilitators and continue to increase the number of parent workshops. Now they’re looking for an institutional home for their program. Ideas? Contact Kenison at canwetalksc@aol.com. For more on the national program, e-mail Kandra Strauss at kstrauss@nea.org or visit www.canwetalk.org.

NEA-HIN

Pass the (Lean) Turkey, Please

It's the holiday season, the time of year when food—sugary, fatty, yummy food—is everywhere we are. Can we really find happiness without eating it all? Experts say yes—now and throughout the year.

There's no doubting it: This is one of the most challenging times of the year for people who love to eat. (That would be most of us.) But health experts say it's also a great time to begin making our relationship with food healthier. Doing so could go a long way toward ending our battles with heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and other diseases related to bad eating habits. Getting a grip, however, doesn't mean jumping on another fad diet or forgoing that pumpkin pie. It just means making some realistic lifestyle changes.

To help us do that—through all the parties and the feasts and the eating adventures beyond—Virginia Inglese, a nutritionist in Fairfax, Virginia, and Leslie Bonci, director of sports medicine at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, offer this healthful advice:

Make It Just Another Day

Holidays and special events usually give us license to overeat, but Inglese says try approaching the day like most others. Have fun, but "eat your treats when you're not vulnerable to overeating"—like when you're starving or ravenous. When you do

finally indulge, Bonci says, "cut your portions into smaller pieces." Definitely don't overload your plate, she warns. "You can always come back for more." And remember: Always enjoy what you're eating, but learn to make trade-offs. If you decide to have that pumpkin pie, pass on the second helping of mac and cheese.

Know Your Cues

Life on the go forces many of us to skip meals and sends us packing in empty snacks, whether we're hungry or not. Inglese recommends eating every three to four hours to re-establish our cues. "So many people get confused about their hunger and eat out of emotion," she says. "This makes them over-hungry and more tempted to eat sugar, salt, and fat without portion control." Eating consistently stabilizes blood sugar and mood swings, so "listen to your cues," Inglese says. "Stop halfway through your meal to see if you are really hungry. Find out what you are really eating for. Just because something is there doesn't mean you need it."



Cindy Revell

Legalize Your Food

While some foods are definitely more healthy than others, "there's no 'good' or 'bad' food," says Bonci. To make long-term healthy changes, we can't treat food as the enemy. Bonci believes that food is far more enjoyable when eaten in moderation. She recommends never eating anything larger than your hand. "When planning your meals think about two fists and a palm," she says. "Have a palm-size serving of protein [chicken, fish, beans], a fist of fruit or vegetables, and a fist of starch."

Stay on Snack Patrol

When snacking, pack goodies that are portable and convenient, suggests Inglese. "Keep snacks available that you like," she says. "If it's not what you like, then it's a waste." Your snacks should be different, with a variety of textures and tastes. Bonci suggests peanut butter crackers, sports bars, yogurt, fruit, and cereals.

It's obviously best to minimize high-fat items that offer little nutrition. But what if you've just got to have that ice cream? "The maximum flavor in a food we're craving usually comes in the first two to three bites," Bonci says. "Once you satisfy that taste, anything after that is overeating."

Be Realistic

"Decide what simple things you can change," says Bonci, "then ask yourself, 'Can I live with this?'" Inglese agrees that taking these kinds of small and manageable steps is critical. "Plan your eating habits on how you live," she says. "Listen to your body, eat what you like best, and do what is best for you." ✓

—Leah Lakins

HEALTHY BITES

BROWN BAGGIN' IT

Looking for some seasonal joy? Dress up a turkey sandwich with cranberry sauce (a nonfat condiment) instead of mayonnaise and add a slim slice of Swiss or Monterey jack cheese and a tablespoon of mashed avocado. Go for whole fruits instead of juices—pears and apples are now in season—and you've got a meal. Or dress up a salad with a small handful of toasted pecan pieces, dried cranberries, or some blue cheese crumbles. Slice a tart apple or a pear on top and add a touch of raspberry vinaigrette, and you've got two of your five servings of fruits and vegetables for the day.

Remember: Winter heating is dry, and water is always in season. So grab a liter and drink up!

GET INSPIRED

"I eat lots of fruits and vegetables, drink gallons of water—and laugh! I always wear my seat belt and make sure everyone in my car wears theirs. I keep my mind active by taking classes and playing games like Scrabble."

Allyson Story

Paraprofessional

Grant Elementary School

Cedar Rapids, Iowa

GOOD QUESTION!

Q: What's so great about soy?

A: Packed with iron, vitamin B, zinc, and calcium, soy is an excellent source of protein. Soy products are a wonderful alternative for people who are lactose intolerant and who are vegetarian, but they're also helpful for women nearing menopause. Soy has isoflavones and genistein, which retard cancer cells and fight heart disease. It's also been proven to lower cholesterol. Gradually make soy part of your diet by adding products such as tofu and tempeh to stir-fry dishes and by adding soy milk to cereal and fruit shakes.

But I Really Want... That!

The holidays don't have to mean expanding your waistline. You can still enjoy traditional foods, but in a healthier way. Bonci suggests making the following switches—during the holidays and the weeks and months that follow. And while you're at it, consider using evaporated skim milk, egg whites, and low-fat cheese in your recipes. Consider limiting your portion sizes, too.

I usually eat...

- Green bean casserole
- Greens with pork
- Stuffing with meat
- Traditional pumpkin pie
- Canned cranberry sauce
- Italian sausage sub
- Fried chicken
- Frosted cereal
- Ice cream
- Pepperoni pizza
- Canned fruit

but I'll try...

- Green beans with toasted almonds
- Asparagus with vinaigrette
- Stuffing with chicken broth
- Pumpkin pie with a ginger snap crust
- Fresh cranberries with orange juice
- Turkey or veggie wrap
- Skinless chicken breast
- Oatmeal with honey
- Sherbet or sorbet
- Veggie pizza
- Fresh fruit smoothie

The Need for Speed

When art teacher **Ellen Beck** pulls her Baltic blue Porsche into the parking lot of Portsmouth Middle School in New Hampshire, no one blinks an eye. That's because community members naturally associate Beck with her favorite extracurricular activity: high-speed performance race car driving.

During the last eight years, Beck has become actively involved with the Porsche Club of America as a driver and chief instructor in the Northeast region. "People from all walks of life get to participate," regardless of the status of their bank accounts, says Beck.

During weekend-long driver education events, Beck teaches novice and advanced students proper technique as they brave the winding tracks of the Porsche road courses.

"I enjoy seeing their grins when people say, 'I just had the best day,'" says Beck.

Beck serves as a role model for her young students and for her fellow Porsche owners. Her kids admire her fearlessness as she whips around the curves of the racetrack at breakneck speed.

"My kids see a woman doing something unusual, and doing it well," she says. "It opens up their eyes." ✓

—Lauren Fischer



Jodie Andruskevich



Kevin Gilbert

Liberty and Faith

After the September 11 terrorist attacks, sixth-grade teacher **Steven McNew**, of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, sent two stuffed bears and a journal around the country so people could record their reactions to the attacks. He didn't think the bears would return. But this spring they did.

While the bears, named Liberty and Faith, were on the road, McNew's class received postcards, letters, and e-mails from people who received the bears. Many people who wrote assumed the bears' identities.

When the bears returned in May, they had traveled through 37 states. The journal also included some extraordinary eyewitness accounts, including a story from a man who lost two firefighter friends when the towers collapsed.

"After reading this journal, I've realized that there are wonderful people in this country," McNew says. ✓

—Irene Arce

Perfect Attendance

Wiley Brooks Jr. hasn't missed a day of school in 12 years. And he plans to continue his perfect attendance.

"If I am able to, I will never miss a day again," says Brooks, a social studies teacher and basketball and track coach. His school, B.F. Liddell Junior High School in Macon, Mississippi, honored him this spring for his 2,000th day in a row on the job.

Brooks' dedication to school is nothing new. During his four years as a student at B.F. Liddell High School and four years studying at Jackson State University, Brooks missed only four days because of the measles.

"I never wanted to stay home when I was little," says Brooks. "I used to cry when I couldn't go to school."

While his students may not have perfect attendance, Brooks believes his record sets an example.

"They are always waiting for me to miss a day," says Brooks. "Now, some students are telling me that they're going to try and break my record."

Brooks' devotion to his students goes well beyond the classroom. Throughout his teaching career, Brooks has helped 23 students go to college and is godfather to 50.

Many of Brooks' godchildren have their own families now and some are even teachers. Brooks still checks on them regularly.

"They live everywhere now," says Brooks. "Some stayed in Mississippi, others are along the East Coast. But I still have all of their numbers." ✓

—Lian Skaff

Pop Art

Jane Smith, an art teacher in Shakopee, Minnesota, always dreamed of writing and illustrating her own children's book. But her students never could have guessed just how big her idea was.

Last fall, Smith solicited the help of her sixth-grade students at Sun Path Elementary School to create the world's largest pop-up book. Five months later the group had a six-page book that stood 8 feet tall and measured 14 feet wide when opened.

Smith, shown here inside her 300-pound story-book, wanted her students to look at books "through the eyes of illustrators," she says.

Smith also approached Guinness World Records about recognizing her efforts. Although Guinness did not award her an official world record title, the organization created a new category for pop-up books in Smith's honor.

Smith received plenty of community interest in her project as well. The book served as the backdrop for a school play and spent one month on display at the Mall of America. The Minneapolis-St. Paul *Star Tribune* also featured it in an article.

Smith hopes to find a permanent location to display the pop-up book, where children can see and enjoy it. She also plans to publish a children's book some day. ✓



Frank Howard



Steve Coleston

Teacher's Pet

When teacher **Jean Keister** brought a terrier to school, many people assumed her eighth-grade students would get distracted with a dog in class. But they didn't. While Keister teaches, Riley, a West Highland white terrier, roams freely around her room at Robin Mickle Middle School in Lincoln, Nebraska. Students sometimes walk around and hold and pet Riley, but they remain focused on class discussions and assignments.

Keister first brought Riley to school two years ago. She had been teaching for almost 30 years and was looking for new and creative teaching strategies, she says. About that time, she saw a television program about the therapeutic use of dogs in nursing homes and orphanages. The show inspired her to bring a dog to class, and the innovative technique renewed her enthusiasm for teaching, she says.

Having Riley in class teaches students to respect other living things and to accept the responsibility of caring for an animal, Keister says. Riley also calms students, especially those who have attention deficit disorder, she adds. Thanks to Riley, the school has a reputation of being an imaginative place where new teaching techniques are tested. ✓

—Irene Arce

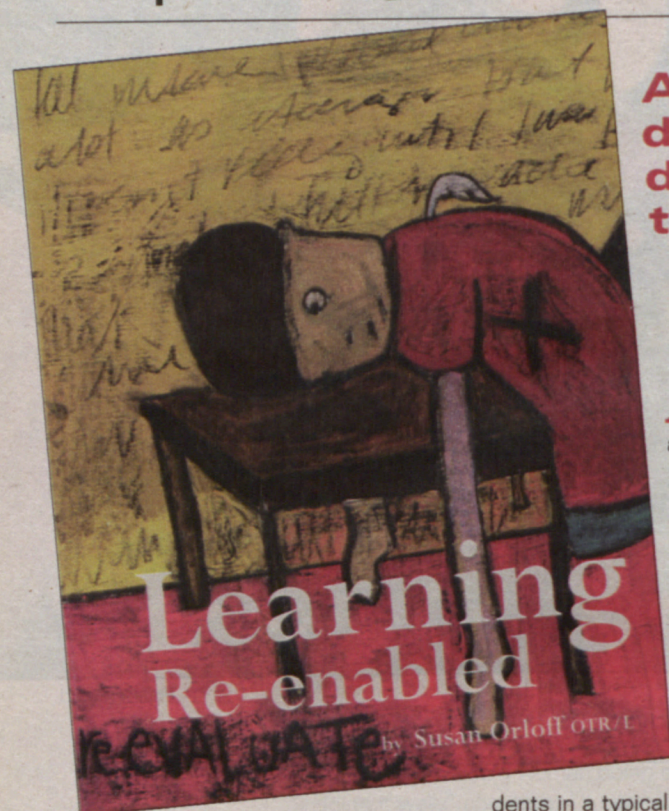


Randy Hampton

GOT A TIP?

Do you have an interesting story idea? Contact Kristen Loschert, section editor, at kloschert@nea.org.

Explaining the Jargon of Special Ed—Simply



A primer on special needs education defines—and describes—learning disabilities and how occupational therapy can help.

After a long day, you might wish for a magic wand if you're feeling overwhelmed by the number of students in your classroom who have various special needs.

You're not alone. As many as one-third or more of stu-

dents in a typical general education classroom receive special education services. These youngsters are usually labeled "learning disabled."

Have you ever wondered: What really is a learning disability? What are the classroom signs of learning disabilities that I should I be looking for in my students? How do I explain it to parents?

While it's never easy to explain the complicated way that growing minds and bodies work or how things go wrong for some students, one resource, *Learning Re-enabled*, can help you accomplish this task with clarity and sensitivity.

The book begins with understandable descriptions of buzz words thrown around when a student has

difficulty learning—learning disability, learning difference, IQ, attention deficit disorder—and explores the fine points of terms such as visual perception and sensory integration with unusual clarity.

An occupational therapist, Susan Orloff wrote this book to help parents and teachers decipher the maze of information that surfaces once a student is identified as having a learning disability.

The book's first part helps parents understand what a learning disability is. The second part outlines for teachers early (birth to age 5) developmental stages and lists classroom signs that indicate when a learning disability might exist.

One helpful section explains how occupational therapists can assist students with learning difficulties. Although many school children see occupational therapists, what they do and how their therapy affects the child's academic progress remains a mystery for most educators and parents. Orloff addresses this problem by including pictorial demonstrations of occupational therapy in action and writing samples that show dramatic changes in writing skills "after therapy."

"It's really important that teachers, parents, and other staff recog-

nize there are others on the team who can support them" says Leslie Jackson of the American Occupational Therapy Association.

"Occupational therapists can play a significant role in education programs for students who are having learning and behavioral challenges."

Learning Re-enabled is loaded with practical ideas about how toys and equipment can be used to supplement a student's therapy. Bonuses include guidelines for parents and teachers about how to have successful IEP meetings. The book also provides a succinct discussion about Section 504 in the appendix.

Orloff believes teachers and parents should interact as team members. To do that cooperatively, all team members need to speak the same language. By design, the book's coherent definitions and many ideas can help everyone on the "team" focus together on enabling students to learn—without a magic wand.

—Patti Ralabate

NEA Student Achievement

EXCERPT

"You are a teacher, not a genie. You are human. You have no magic wand. It is OK to say you need help. Benefit from the input of the parents. They are struggling too."

LEARNING RE-ENABLED

By Susan Orloff

148 pp. \$24.95 paperback;
Children's Special Services.
To order, visit www.amazon.com.

BOOKS by NEA Members

On Your Mark, Get Set, Teach!

By Lisa Funari Willever and Lisa Battinelli



A children's book author and a former Teacher of the Year share the methods, tips, and techniques used by successful teachers. This book prepares new teachers

for the transition to school as a workplace and includes resource lists of websites that offer teacher "freebies," and a state-by-state directory of teachers' stores. 192 pp. \$13.95 plus s&h from Franklin Mason Press. To order go to www.franklinmasonpress.com.

Tricks of the Trade: In & Out of the Classroom

By Peggy Campbell-Rush



Learn how to better organize your time, reduce interruptions in class, and involve parents in the classroom. A kindergarten teacher with more than 20 years'

experience teaching primary grades wrote this collection of short, easy-to-read suggestions, which are useful for any preK-2 teacher. 96 pp. \$12.95 from Crystal Springs Books. To order, call 800/321-0401 or go to www.crystalsprings.com.

Whose Coat?

By John Luksetich, illustrated by Patti Kern

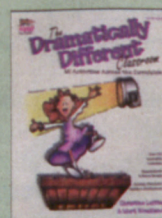


Written by a 14-year veteran teacher, this book gently introduces young children to the topic of animal rights through a young

girl's search for the origin of fur coats. (Here, the animals eventually get their fur coats back.) The book can be used to teach the value of caring and compassion. 32 pp. \$14.95 from Imagine Nation Press. To order, call 888/483-7547 or 562/431-3032; or go to www.imagenationpress.com

The Dramatically Different Classroom: Multiple Intelligence Activities Across The Curriculum

By Mark Weakland and Christine Laitta



Awaken the Einsteins and Shakespeares in your class with this guide full of fresh activities, all focusing on ensemble projects, language

arts, social studies, mathematics, science, health, and recess games and ideas. Each activity lists the multiple intelligences it engages. 198 pp. \$25 from Kagan Publishing. To order, go to <http://kaganonline.com/Catalog/index.html> or call 800/933-2667.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Safe Schools

How can we make schools safe and supportive learning communities?



The Learning First Alliance, a partnership of 12 education associations including NEA, outlines the arguments for and requirements of safe

schools in *Every Child Learning: Safe and Supportive Schools*. Find the report at www.learningfirst.org/publications.html or call the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development at 800/933-2723, ext. 2.

Children Are Our Future



In *Generation Fix: Young Ideas for a Better World*, Elizabeth Rusch tells the stories of kids working to solve the world's problems in their own creative ways. Let the

accounts, such as the one of a 10-year-old who organized a support program for homeless children, inspire your students to make their own mark. 176 pp. \$9.95 from Beyond Words Publishing. To order, call 503/531-8700 or go to www.generationfix.com.

Spoken Like a True Leader

The powerful words from his father's Sunday gospels inspired Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to initiate his own campaign to work toward racial equality and peace. *Martin's Big*



Words, by Doreen Rappaport, simplifies the complex biography of King so young readers can grasp the book's message. 32 pp. \$15.99

from Hyperion/Jump at the Sun. To order, go to www.amazon.com.

Food Science

The FDA, in collaboration with the National Science Teachers Association, has created *Science and Our Food Supply*, an interactive supplementary curriculum for middle and high school science classes. The guide contains food safety facts and provides challenging hands-on, minds-on activities that link food science and safety to students' daily lives. For a free copy, go to www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/tchcuric.html.

Moving Mountains

Shake up geography and science lessons with *Mountains and Our Moving Earth* by Pam Robson. Students ages 7-9 learn about volcanoes, the inside of the Earth, rocks and minerals, and more through simple experiments that answer questions about our planet. 32 pp. \$22.90 from Copper Beech Books. To order, go to www.millbrookpress.com or call 800/462-4703.

Get A Clue

Students grades five through eight can learn about environmental issues

TVTIPS

In the Mix

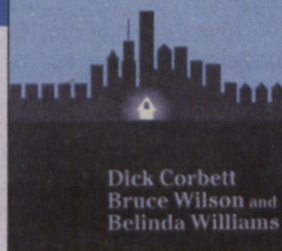
PBS, Week of November 16, check local listings for dates and times.

In the Mix, the award-winning documentary series for teens, presents "Living with Change," a program highlighting how teens have responded and coped with the effects of the ongoing events of the past year. Interviews include students who were closest to Ground Zero and have returned to their schools, a teen EMT who volunteered at the site, a boy who abused drugs but stopped after 9/11, and a teen who lost her stepfather, a firefighter. Companion study guides and a website are available at www.inthemix.org. All episodes have one-year off-air taping rights for educators.

TV Tips are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., www.kidsnet.org, and from Cable in the Classroom at www.ciconline.org.

Effort and Excellence in Urban Classrooms

Expecting—and Getting—Success with All Students



Dick Corbett
Bruce Wilson and
Belinda Williams

EXCERPT

Everyone agreed that the driving motto of the school was that every student would complete every assignment at a level sufficient to get a B. Students worked on unfinished and unsatisfactory assignments until they were complete and satisfactory, all the while keeping up with new work. A poster on the wall of one teacher's classroom defined the grading scale:

A = Above and beyond
B = The basics, you know your stuff
I = Incomplete, you need more time and support

To order, call 800/229-4200, or check the Web at www.nea.org/books

From the NEA Professional Library

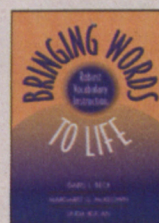
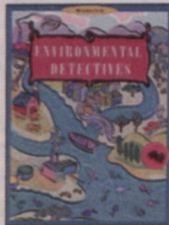
Effort and Excellence in Urban Classrooms: Expecting—and Getting—Success with All Students

Copublished by NEA and Columbia Teachers College Press

Dick Corbett, Bruce Wilson, and Belinda Williams
178 pp. \$21.95 NEA members
\$23.95 nonmembers
2021-9-00-FN

This timely volume explores in detail how educators closed the performance gap for low-income students by linking expectations and results. Drawing heavily on the experiences of students, teachers, and parents, this book examines the successful journey of students who traditionally had not succeeded academically. Described as a "must read" for those serious about closing the achievement gap, *Effort and Excellence* reveals how these educators enabled students to be competitive academically with anyone.

with *Environmental Detectives* by Kevin Beal and Carolyn Willard. This teacher's guide creates a story for students of a young boy who investigates why the fish in his town's waters are dying. Suspect statements, records, newspaper articles, charts, secret documents, and worksheets can all be photocopied for students. 200 pp. \$25.50 from Lawrence Hall of Science GEMS. To order, go to www.lhsgems.org or call 510/642-7771.



Lively Words

Professors Isabel L. Beck, Margaret G. McKeown, and Linda Kucan create an essential resource for K-12 teachers in *Bringing*

Words to Life. Find useful tips on how to choose vocabulary words for students and get students to use them in daily conversation. Then watch kindergartners' vocabulary improve and older students breeze through classic literature. 148 pp. \$18 from Guilford Publications. To order, go to www.guilford.com.

A Moment of Peace and Quiet: Meditations for Teachers

By Gail G. Mesplay



Looking for a breather in a hectic day? Try opening this book to a random page and reading a short quotation and

reflection on a topic such as responsibility or enthusiasm. Written and compiled by a 33-year teacher, let this collection of quotes and musings help you find a quiet moment in your day. 204 pp. \$14 from Smyth and Helwys Publishing. To order, go to www.helwys.com or call 800/747-3016.



Thirteen/WNET New York, J. Huegel

TVTIPS

Nick News: Special Edition

Nickelodeon, November 8 and 20, 5 a.m., ET, check local listings.
Linda Ellerbee created this series of specials from the award-winning news magazine for kids in grades 4-6. This month's program, "It's Only Television," teaches kids how to become media literate and explains how to distinguish between reality and fantasy. Jeff Sagansky, president of CBS Entertainment, and producer Gary Goldberg explain the economics of television and take viewers through the creation of a new series. The show can be taped and used in the classroom for 10 years with a lesson plan found at www.teachers.nick.com.

Home for the Holidays: The History of Thanksgiving

History Channel, November 15, 6 a.m., ET.
This History Channel Classroom documentary traces the history of

the celebration that began as a Pilgrim harvest feast in the 1620s, was declared a national holiday by Abraham Lincoln in 1863, and remains the quintessential U.S. holiday. The program also looks at traditional holiday elements, such as turkey dinners and football. The show can be taped and used in the classroom for two years. A lesson plan is available at www.historychannel.com/classroom.

Ozzy & Drix

Kids!WB!, November 16, 9:30 - 10 a.m., ET.
Based on the film "Osmosis Jones" this animated adventure, developed with a Harvard medical consultant, follows the exploits of a white blood cell cop, Ozzy, and his partner, over-the-counter cold pill Drix, as they defend the City of Hector—the body of a 13-year-old boy—to investigate and combat viruses and infections. In this episode, "Where's the Smoke," Hector experiments with cigarettes and unleashes a creature known as

Nick O'Teen into the City of Hector. Ozzy and Drix must stop Nick before he travels to the brain and causes Hector to smoke again.

Biography for Kids

A&E, November 18, 7 a.m., ET ("Pocohontas") and November 29, 7 a.m., ET ("Eureka!"), check local listings.

This Emmy Award-winning series profiles political leaders, artists, and other famous figures. "Pocohontas: Ambassador to the New World"



explores the unknown side of this tragic heroine and describes her life as a diplomat and influential leader. "Eureka! The 20th Century's Top 15 Inventors," features interviews with authors, executives, media personalities, and the inventors themselves, as this program profiles the lives of some of the most important inventors of the 20th century. Both shows can be taped and used in the classroom for two years, and both have lesson plans at www.aande.com/class.

The Real Thomas Jefferson

Discovery Channel, November 25, 9 a.m., ET.

This program profiles one of the founding fathers of the United States, including his invention of our monetary system and his fight for religious freedom and publicly funded education. The show can be taped and used in the classroom for one year. Go to <http://school.discovery.com/teachers> for an accompanying lesson plan.

Available now in

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Coming in 2003...

*Discount rates may not be available in Oregon, New Mexico or Tennessee.

AHNT1102

Are we there yet?

State by state, we're bringing discount auto insurance to America's educators.

As a member of the NEA, you can qualify for NEA Members Auto & Home Insurance™ Program, an outstanding plan with discount rates negotiated exclusively for you.

For more than 50 years, A+ Auto & Home Insurance Plus has been creating unique plans for education professionals.

Over the next couple of years, we'll be bringing our plans to educators across America. Check to see if we're in your state. With just one call, you could save hundreds of dollars a year.

 **NEA Members**
Auto & Home Insurance Program

Protecting America's educators for over 50 years.



Call for a fast, free quote today,
toll-free: 1-866-680-5141.

Destination: America, Land of Dreams

WAMI, Thursday, November 28, 7 – 7:30 p.m., ET.

Designed to provide peer modeling, this special profiles young immigrants to America as they share their successful assimilations into schools and communities from New York to Denver. Home videos and videotape created by kids are intercut with interviews, graphics, and historical perspectives about the countries these students left behind.

Friday on the Rocks

National Geographic Channel, November 29, 1 p.m. – 2 a.m. ET. Epic battles, fabled shipwrecks, lost treasures, last voyages, and more are revealed in *Friday on the Rocks*. In this special, Robert Ballard, world-renowned discoverer of the *Titanic* and the German battleship *Bismarck*, presents his personal insights in the "Search for the Submarine I-52"—the Japanese submarine that sank in 1944 with two tons of gold; "Terror At Sea" on the 45th anniversary of the sinking of the *Andrea Doria*; "Deep Sea Hunting" for treasured relics of an ancient ship at the bottom of the Aegean Sea; and "Secrets of Titanic," which documents his expedition to locate the famous vessel.

James Cameron's Expedition: Bismarck

Discovery Channel, December 8, 8 p.m., ET, check local listings. In 1941, the British bombed and sunk Germany's "unsinkable" *DKM Bismarck*. In 2002, *Titanic* director James Cameron conducted the first detailed survey of the sunken ship



with the help of revolutionary camera and lighting equipment and remotely operated vehicles. Enhanced by interviews, commentary from historians, and archival materials, the program explores the last days of the ship and investigates the cause of its sinking.

Rocks with Wings

PBS, December 11, 9 p.m., ET, check local listings. Follow the journey of Jerry Richardson, an African-American star college basketball player from Texas, and the Lady Chieftains, a women's high school basketball team from the Navajo community of Shiprock, New Mexico, in this two-hour documentary. With intense and



University of Central Florida

at times controversial determination, Richardson molds the young women into fighters on the court. What results is an inspirational story about the meaning of winning and losing, set against a complex background of race and heritage and societal expectations—for the players, the coach, and the Navajo community.

Degrassi: The Next Generation

Noggin/The N, Saturday, December 31, 9 p.m. – 3 a.m., ET.

It's New Year's Eve and the Degrassi kids are celebrating with a lock-in at Degrassi Community School. The "Degrassi New Year's Lock-in Eve" will feature back-to-back episodes of the series chosen by the show's stars who will host the special. At 11:30 p.m., a



Eptome Pictures, Inc.

viewer's choice episode will close out the year. Beginning November 25 through December 23 kids can log on to vote at the N website at www.the-n.com. A discussion guide for parents can be found on www.discussions.the-n.com.

A Very Muppet Christmas Movie

NBC, December, check local listings.

Whoopi Goldberg joins Kermit the Frog, Miss Piggy, and an all-star Muppet cast in this first-ever made-for-television holiday Muppet movie. Filled with celebrity cameo appearances, the film pays homage to all Christmas movies as Kermit struggles, on Christmas eve, to save the Muppet Theater from the stylish, yet Scroogish, bank owner Rachel Bitter-



man (played by Joan Cusack), who plans to demolish it. David Arquette plays Daniel, the rookie angel trying to earn his wings by helping Kermit.

NEA Leaders Hit the Road

NEA President Reg Weaver kicked off his presidency in September by traveling the country to meet more NEA members and hear firsthand the issues they find most critical. Weaver also met with the media and with other education organizations to discuss NEA's advocacy of public education.

In late September, Weaver traveled to Wisconsin to meet with Milwaukee Teachers Education Association members and visit four local schools.

At Riverside High School, students in an AP history class engaged the NEA president in a discussion on vouchers. Students noted that they felt vouchers violated the separation of church and state, and that public schools were more inclusive.

Weaver also met with the media while in Milwaukee. WMCS radio's top-rated "Morning Magazine with Keith Murphy" plus NBC, FoxNews, and Wisconsin Public Radio all featured interviews with the NEA president, covering issues including teacher morale, vouchers, and ESEA. Weaver then met with an editorial board of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

Weaver, NEA Vice President Dennis Van Roekel, and Secretary-Treasurer Lily Eskelsen have continued to travel the country. For Weaver, late October began a national Listening Tour, where hundreds of NEA members got the opportunity to see and speak to their president in person. Check out future issues of *NEA Today* for details.

September 26-28

NEA President Reg Weaver visits Elm Place School in Highland Park, Illinois, and schools in South Bend, Indiana.

September 28

NEA Vice President Dennis Van Roekel attends the Local Presidents Meeting of the Idaho Education Association in Boise.

October 7

Dennis Van Roekel visits Marana Middle School (Arizona) for in-service day.

October 11

Reg Weaver attends NEA Midwestern Regional Minority Leadership Training Seminar, Kansas City, Missouri.

October 12

Dennis Van Roekel attends Michigan Education Association's 150th anniversary celebration in Lansing.

October 13

Reg Weaver attends NEA Southeast Regional Minority Leadership Training Seminar, Lake Buena Vista, Florida.

October 14

Reg Weaver attends Clarke County Education Association Educational Employees meeting in Berryville, Virginia.

October 18

Reg Weaver speaks at the Priority Schools Conference 2002 in Los Angeles, California.

October 18-19

NEA Secretary-Treasurer Lily Eskelsen attends Fairfax (Virginia) Education Association Emerging

Leaders Conference.

October 19

Reg Weaver attends the Illinois Education Association-Education Support Professional Conference in Schaumburg, Illinois.

October 20

Dennis Van Roekel attends the Iowa City Education Association membership dinner and then the Geode Education Association UniServ Fall Assembly the next day in Burlington, Iowa.

Lily Eskelsen attends the California Teachers Association, Region 2, Leadership Conference.

October 21

Reg Weaver attends Hawaii State Teachers Association's Institute Week sessions.

October 22

Lily Eskelsen attends National Council on Teacher Retirement meeting in Washington, D.C.

October 23

Reg Weaver attends district-wide Professional Development Day in Southfield, Michigan.

October 24

Reg Weaver visits schools in Rock Island, Moline, and Galesburg, Illinois.

October 25

Reg Weaver attends NEA Northeast Regional Minority Leadership Training Seminar, Boston, Massachusetts.

October 29

Reg Weaver's national Listening Tour commences.

WEB WINNERS

Practical Reading Tools

Educators can move from theory to practice with the new Resources for Educators section on the Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) website. Find recommended book lists, professional development articles, Internet resources, teaching tips, an Ask the Expert column, student activities, and news and events calendar at this comprehensive site from one of NEA's Read Across America partners. Go to www.rif.org.



TheAntiDrug.com Educator Resource

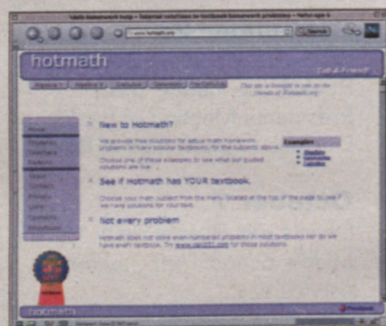
TeachersGuide—a drug education resource developed by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign—provides teachers with ideas and resources for incorporating drug prevention messages into the classroom. Classroom activities were also developed by NEA's Health Information Network. While the activities are not a drug education curriculum, they offer ways to easily integrate drug prevention activities into different subject areas and can be used by almost any teacher of students age 11-14. Follow the les-



sons as written or tailor them to best meet the needs of your students and subject area. The site also provides additional links to educational resources and organizations that will take you to specific drug prevention and awareness information. Go to www.TeachersGuide.org.

Hotmath

Hotmath provides step-by-step solutions to homework problems in leading algebra, geometry, pre-calculus, and calculus textbooks, and also provides links to recommended math sites. Just select the textbook and enter the page number and problem number to view guided solutions. Offered last year for a fee, www.hotmath.org is now free.



Art for all Ages

This site attracts children in grades K-12 with its unique educational experiences in art with the late Keith Haring's colorful, animated cartoon drawings. Children will enjoy interactive coloring books, picture puzzles, and tic-tac-toe. A new lesson plans section—organized by subject, age, and materials—offers teachers, parents, students, and fans resources for enriching, explorative lessons for all ages and fields of study. Go to www.haringkids.com.



Conflict Coverage

For nearly two years now, the Middle East has been wracked by violence between Israelis and Palestinians. As renewed bouts of violence continue to pop up, the reporters and producers at National Public Radio have followed the conflict. Their Middle East website has compiled an archive of daily reports, audio links, and transcripts from their "All Things Considered" and "Morning Edition" programs, starting with shows from the beginning of May. Go to www.npr.org/news/specials/mideast/transcripts/index.html.



Braille Bug

The Braille Bug site teaches sighted children all about Braille and raises awareness for the issues that face America's 10 million blind or visually impaired children and adults. Created by the American Foundation for the Blind—an organization to which Helen Keller devoted more than 40 years of her life—Braille Bug also contains fun activities that help children familiarize



themselves with Braille and its history. Go to www.afb.org/braillebug/.

Video Projects Guide

This website offers a comprehensive guide for teaching students how to produce a complete video project. Included is a 70-part online textbook that covers countless topics related to film—from script writing and the importance of lighting to 15 steps of production and legal and ethical issues. Students can tailor sample video projects to suit their schools' needs, look up key terms, and take interactive quizzes. Go to www.cybercollege.com/tvp_ind.htm.



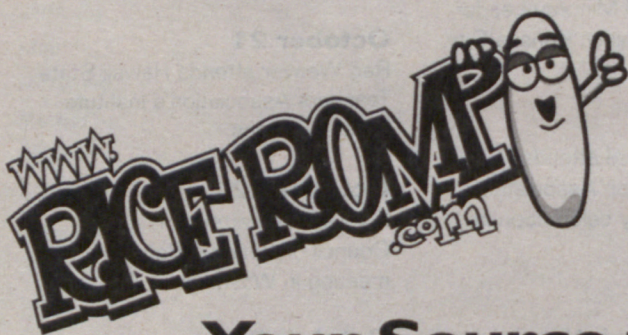
New York Times Digital

For grades 3-12, the New York Times Learning Network provides interactive learning resources to match the contents of the newspaper. Students benefit from geography and vocabulary "knowledge tools" as they learn about the day's top stories. They can also take online news quizzes, complete crossword puzzles, and participate in special features such as "Ask a Reporter." The site is equipped with daily lesson plans, news snapshots, and much more. Go to www.nytimes.com/learning/.



Simple Science

Science Made Simple is exactly that—it answers science questions in a way kids can understand—questions such as "Why is the sky blue?" and "How do I breathe?" Easy science experiments include explanations of how static electricity works and why leaves change colors in the



Your Source for...

On-line Educational Resources

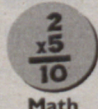
Lesson Aids for Teachers

Fun and Challenging Game Format for Students

Written by Teachers

Multiple Subjects

Grades K-12



Math



Science



Health



Social Studies

www.RiceRomp.com is provided by the U S Rice Producers Association, a nonprofit association which represents rice farmers in the states of AR, CA, LA, MS, MO and TX.

fall. Learn about the latest in science news and get your science questions answered in a clear, concise way. Go to www.sciencemadesimple.com.

Smithsonian Center

Developed for the education community, this site demonstrates leadership in education at the Smithsonian—the world's largest museum and research complex—and produces a variety of programs, services, and resources for the education community. You'll find lesson plans, media catalogs, field trips, a resource bank, an educator's tool kit, and much more. Go to <http://educate.si.edu>.



Health Strategies

Developed by The Rodale Institute, www.kidsregen.org helps people rediscover that the food they eat is a primary tool in achieving optimum health and avoiding illness and disease. The Kid's Re-generation Resource Network offers many useful health tips and programs, such as the launch of an exciting, year-long fitness and nutrition program that will motivate children as they work towards improving their eating and fitness habits each month.



Personal Digital Assistant

Thinking about buying a hand-held computer or other personal digital assistant (PDA)? Then visit the EduPalm website. Created by NEA member Gary Ankney, this site includes articles about what to look for when buying a PDA, as well as many links to other helpful articles and buying guides. Once you own a hand-held, return to the site for links to downloadable software and articles on how best to use and upgrade your PDA. Go to <http://edupalm.org>.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards

Do you know an *Education Hero*, a person or a group who has helped to improve life for people in your school, community, or state? If so, you should nominate that individual or NEA affiliate for an NEA Human and Civil Rights Award.

The process is easy. Nominating information and forms can be obtained by:

- Writing to NEA Human and Civil Rights, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-3290;
- Downloading files from www.nea.org/ra/03joint/03hcrnominate.html; or
- Calling NEA Human and Civil Rights at 202/822-7700.

Your nominee could be among the

awardees honored at NEA's 37th Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner in New Orleans, Louisiana, July 2, 2003. But hurry—the nomination deadline is December 1, 2002. Don't let your education hero down.

Fellowship Sends Teachers to the Hill

Now K-12 teachers can directly express their concerns to the

NEA VALUEBUILDER • INVESTMENT VALUE FOR NEA MEMBERS



to save more for retirement, "but isn't there a limit?"

Even if you are already deferring the maximum amount to your TSA, now there's a way to save even more for retirement — **The NEA Valuebuilder® Mutual Fund 457.**

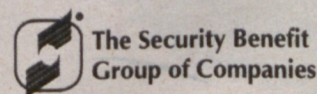
Current tax law lets you defer up to the maximum amount in both your 403(b) TSA program and a 457 Deferred Compensation plan. The 457 plan offers these advantages:

- Defer up to 100% of your income up to a certain maximum (e.g. \$11,000 for 2002). This limit is not reduced by contributions to another plan, such as a TSA.
- Participants 50 and older can defer an additional \$1,000 annually as part of a "catch-up provision". The 457 also permits higher deferrals three years before retirement.
- The NEA Valuebuilder Mutual Fund 457 offers a wide range of mutual funds managed by nationally recognized money managers.

If saving more for your retirement sounds good to you, we're here to help you start today with a 457 Deferred Compensation plan or one of our many other NEA Valuebuilder products.

Call your NEA Valuebuilder Financial Counselor
toll free to personally take you through the investment process.

1-877-NEA-8668, ext. 3655



Security Distributors, Inc., a member of the Security Benefit Group of Companies.

For more complete information about the NEA Valuebuilder Variable Annuity TSA available through the NEA Valuebuilder Program, including all charges and expenses, obtain a prospectus from Security Distributors, Inc. and read it carefully before investing. Variable annuities available through the NEA Valuebuilder Program are distributed by Security Distributors, Inc. and issued by Security Benefit Life Insurance Company. The NEA Valuebuilder Mutual Fund TSA, a Custodial Account under §403(b)(7) of the Internal Revenue Code and the NEA Valuebuilder Mutual Fund 457, a Trust Account under §457(g) of the Internal Revenue Code, make available various mutual funds for investment. For more complete information about the mutual funds in which the Custodial Account or Trust Account invest, obtain a prospectus from Security Distributors, Inc. and read it carefully before investing.

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nation's policymakers. Funded by federal agencies such as NASA and the National Science Foundation, the Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship Program sends educators who have demonstrated excellence in their math, science, and technology classrooms to Washington, D.C., for one full year. While there, educators work with Congress and the appropriate

branches of the federal government. In the past, Einstein Fellows have drafted legislation, designed national education programs, and played a part in evaluating teacher preparation in their respective fields. Participants will receive up to \$5,000 per month in compensation, in addition to travel and lodging allowances. Online applications only are accepted between November 1,

2002, and February 1, 2003. Visit www.scied.science.doe.gov for an application, selection criteria, and financial compensation information.

Celebrate Book Week

"Book Time" is the theme of this year's Book Week, November 18-24, and the Children's Book Council encourages children, and the adults who care for them, to make time

each day to spend with a favorite book. For specific ways to participate in Book Week, and for ideas to promote it, go to www.cbcbooks.org/html/book_week.html.

Census Bureau Lesson Plan Contest

In 1999, the U.S. Census Bureau launched its Census In Schools Program, which helped teachers incorporate Census 2000 data into classrooms. Now, the Bureau wants to include both its economic and demographic data in the existing program. To kick-off this expansion effort, the Bureau is sponsoring a nationwide Lesson Plan Contest. Interested educators should submit their ideas for using Bureau statistics in their lessons.

A panel will evaluate lesson plan submissions. Selected lesson plans will be tested in classrooms across the nation prior to choosing the final winners for the following categories: elementary (K-5), middle (6-8) and high school (9-12) grade levels. Contest winners receive a certificate of recognition from the director of the Census Bureau and a teacher's kit containing samples of Bureau data products and promotional items. A profile of the winners, their lesson plans, and participating schools will be highlighted on the Bureau's website. The deadline for submitting entries is December 1, 2002. For more information, go to www.census.gov/mcd/lesson.html.

Promote Gender Equity

Eleanor Roosevelt Teacher Fellowships, sponsored by the American Association of University Women, provide professional development opportunities for women public school teachers; improve girls' learning opportunities, especially in math, science, and technology; and promote equity and long-term change in classrooms, schools, and school systems.

Professional Development Fellowships of up to \$5,000 each will fund K-12 women public school teachers for professional development workshops or conferences, provide seed money for these teachers to plan a gender-equity school-based program, and cover their attendance at the five-day Eleanor Roosevelt Teacher Institute held July 2003 in Washington, D.C.

Women public school teachers also may apply for a Project Implementation Grant, which provides support for a classroom or school program to advance gender equity. Grants up to \$10,000 are available. Preference is given to 2002-03 Professional Development Fellowship recipients.

Eleanor Roosevelt Teacher Fellowships are available to all women K-12 public school teachers. Applicants must be U.S. citizens or

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permanent residents who have taught for at least three years and are committed to teaching beyond the fellowship year, and applications must be postmarked by January 10, 2003. The Foundation especially encourages applications from women of color and others from underrepresented groups, as well as those who teach underserved students. For more information, go to www.aauw.org.

Honoring U.S. Documents

In honor of the 215th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution, President Bush announced the "Our Documents" initiative to promote public understanding of how the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizens have taken shape over time. "Our Documents" will include a series of events—workshops, town meetings, competitions, votes—that revolve around 100 milestone U.S. documents. All Americans are encouraged to read these documents and to vote at www.ourdocuments.gov for the one they consider the most significant.

"Our Documents" events tie into the 2002-03 National History Day celebration with teacher and student competitions. "Teaching Our Documents: A National History Day Competition" invites history and social studies teachers to develop document-based lesson plans for national awards and distribution, and develop and test a classroom lesson focusing on the 100 milestone documents in U.S. history.

"Understanding Our Documents: A Competition for Students" invites students to create an exhibit, documentary, paper, or performance that makes history come alive and relates to the National History Day theme, Rights and Responsibilities in History. Educator and student awards will be announced at the National History Day competition June 15-19, 2003. For other projects and more information, go to www.ourdocuments.gov.

Ballpoint Pencils

Writing takes a new edge this school year as Stylus introduces the first liquid lead ballpoint pencil. The liquid lead pencil feels just like a standard number two pencil and is non-toxic, can be used for all types schoolwork, and best of all, requires no sharpening. Look for the ballpoint pencils at office supply stores for about \$1.99-\$3.99 per pack.

National Poison Help Hotline

Fifty-three percent of poison exposures occur in children under the age of six. Keep students safe this school year with the new Poison Help Hotline. By calling the hotline at 800/222-1222, teachers, parents, and school nurses can get 24-hour

access to 65 poison centers around the country. For more information, contact the American Association of Poison Centers at 202/362-1222 or www.1-800-222-1222.info.

Solving Community Problems

Do your students have wacky or innovative ideas you believe are worthwhile? Enter them in this year's

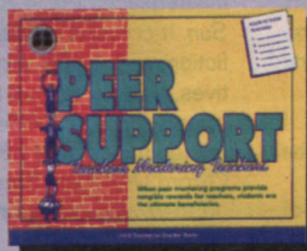
Bayer/NSF Awards. Sponsored by the Bayer Corporation, the National Science Foundation, and the Christopher Columbus Foundation, this annual award allows students to team up with a coach to identify a community problem and use science and technology to solve it. Teams have a chance of winning a trip to Walt Disney World, up to \$5,000 in savings bonds, and the \$25,000

Columbus Foundation Community Grant. Past NEA finalists have included Vicki Presson of Tennessee, Terry Allinger of California, Steven Lloyd of Nevada, and Joe Ann Clark of Mississippi.

The application deadline is January 31, 2003. To enter the competition or for more information, call 800/291-6020 or visit www.christophercolumbusawards.com.

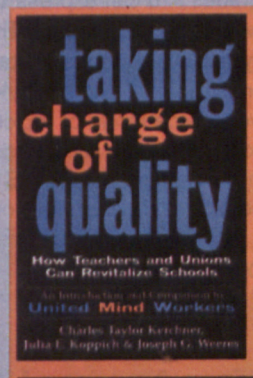
Class Dismissed!

Words that most kids can't wait to hear at the end of the day. But learning doesn't really end when the school bell rings. Just as students have homework to prepare for the next day's lessons, as an educator, you must stay prepared as well. With the NEA Professional Library's Professional Development Series, you'll find the resources you need to meet the challenges of the 21st century classroom.



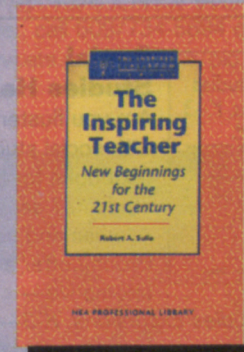
Peer mentoring groups are blooming across the country as teachers reach out to their colleagues for advice and support. As part of the Teacher-to-Teacher series, **Peer Support: Teachers Mentoring Teachers** shows you how your colleagues are making peer mentoring programs work for them. The stories in this book cover a variety of situations, from how to set up a mentoring program to how to create effective collegial partnerships. Whether you're involved in a mentoring program, getting ready to start one, or just interested in the topic, this book is a valuable resource.

96 pp., Item #2913-5-00-D
Nonmember price \$12.95
NEA Members \$9.95



Taking Charge of Quality is the ultimate book-club/study-group discussion starter on teacher unions. This clear and concise book offers a solid blueprint for improving teaching and learning, setting higher standards, and taking charge of the profession through peer review. If you want to explore the role of teacher unions and the importance of teachers to American democracy in the 21st century, then add this book to your reading list.

56 pp., Item #2168-1-00-D
Nonmember price \$7.95
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Inspiring teachers teach more than facts and figures. They teach a way of being in the world. **The Inspiring Teacher** is a valuable resource for teachers who want to revitalize their classrooms. You'll find out about brain-based learning... you'll get information on forming positive alliances with colleagues and parents... you'll study the skills to help people resolve conflicts effectively... and you'll learn how to inspire your students by drawing forth their potential.

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DIVERSITY Calendar

November

American Indian Heritage Month

This year marks the twelve-year anniversary of National American Indian Heritage Month, the time chosen to honor and celebrate the history and contributions of the continent's first inhabitants. For more on American Indian heritage, including lesson plans, go to www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson209.shtml.

november

December

December 12—Virgin of Guadalupe Day

Legend says that soon after the Spanish conquest of Mexico, the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared and delivered a message to a poor man who spread her message of love and compassion. Today, millions of Mexicans venerate the Virgin of Guadalupe and arrange special activities to commemorate her day. For more, go to www.sancta.org/intro.html or www.inside-mexico.com/guadalupe.htm.

december

November 30–December 7—Hanukkah

Hanukkah, the "Festival of Lights," begins at sundown on November 29. With blessings, games, and festive foods, Hanukkah celebrates the triumphs of ancient Jewish heroes. For more, visit www.infoplease.com/spot/hanukkah.html or www.teachervision.com/lesson-plans/lesson-3557.html.

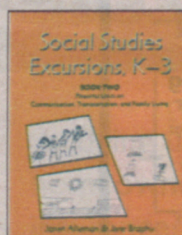
December 25—Christmas

Christmas commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ, but the holiday may also include other traditions such as exchanging gifts and cards, singing carols, decorating evergreen trees, and telling stories about St. Nicolas, or Santa Claus. For more, go to www.holidays.net/christmas/.

December 26–January 1—Kwanzaa

This African-American and Pan-African holiday honors family, community, and culture by celebrating seven principles: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. For more, visit www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE



Social Studies Help

Are you flustered with social studies textbooks for K-3 students? Janet Alleman and Jere Brophy offer an alternative—

Social Studies Excursions, K-3—to supplement or replace your text. The second book in a series of three, the authors give extensive examples to assist in teaching units on communication, transportation, and family living. 324 pp., \$27.50 from Heinemann. To order, call 800/225-5800 or go to www.heinemann.com.

Express Yourself

"Dedicated to the voice of today's youth," *Word Dance* magazine serves as a forum in which students

in grades K-8 can express themselves outside of school. The quarterly published issues contain short stories, poems, and artwork that cover a wide range of topics and emotions. A year subscription to the nonprofit magazine costs \$18 (all proceeds go toward development of the magazine) and is available from Playful Productions, Inc. To order, call 302/894-1950 or visit www.worddance.com.

African-American Lit at Your Fingertips



From Toni Morrison to James Baldwin, *The Concise Oxford Companion to African American Literature* serves as a substantial guide to literary and theatrical

masterpieces like *A Raisin in the Sun*. It contains articles on poetry, fiction, and drama; on slave narratives, Sunday School literature, and oratory; and on a wide spectrum of related topics. 488 pp. \$24.95 by Oxford University Press. To order, go to www.oup-usa.org or call 800/451-7556.

Swimming Through History



Cape Cod got its name in 1614 after Captain John Smith supposedly caught 47,000 codfish off the coast of the peninsula. Young readers will learn this and other facts about a fish that's been surprisingly important to world history in Mark Kurlansky's *The Cod's Tale*. Beautifully illustrated, the book includes a concise history of this threatened species. 46 pp. \$16.99 plus s&h from G.P. Putnam's Sons. To order, call 800/788-6262.

Cape Cod got its name in 1614 after Captain John Smith supposedly



Dinosaur Dream

In the 19th century, despite a lack of knowledge of dinosaurs at the time, a Victorian artist named Waterhouse Hawkins was determined to bring them to life. He devoted over three decades to building the first life-size models of dinosaurs for the world to see. His artwork made him famous around the world. Based on actual events, Barbara Kerley's *The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins* benefits from bold, intricate illustrations. \$12 from

Scholastic Press. To order, go to www.amazon.com.



Save the Arts

The arts are wonderful ways of self-expression, but today, many schools have cut their art programs. In *Arts*

with the Brain in Mind, Eric Jensen argues that the arts have a direct positive effect on students and will make them well-rounded, intelligent people with a greater capacity for learning. Jensen also includes dozens of great, simple suggestions for incorporating the arts in the classroom. \$22.95 from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. To order, go to www.ascd.org or call 800/933-2723.



Decisions About Underage Drinking

Studies show that parents are the number one influence for youths aged 8-

17 when making decisions about drinking. The message to parents is clear: Talk to your children about drinking—now. The *Family Talk About Drinking* program is designed to guide parents through what to say and do. The program was developed by a panel of educators, psychologists, and medical professionals and includes a brochure, video, and support materials. To obtain your free copy, call 800/359-8255 or visit the Family Talk site at www.familytalkonline.com.



Building Successful Partnerships: A Guide for Developing Parent and Family Involvement Programs

is a comprehensive and practical guide from one of the leading authorities on parental involvement—National PTA. Now in its second printing, the book is designed to help schools and communities work effectively together.

Building Successful Partnerships is based on National PTA's National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs and offers field-tested strategies for overcoming barriers, reaching out to key participants, and developing an

effective parent involvement program. The work is part of a National PTA initiative to make parent involvement the foundation upon which all other education reform efforts should be based.

School reform and recent legislation recognize the need for school-based family involvement practices and policies. Individuals who use this book can work together to educate others to effectively involve parents in their child's education. 243 pp. \$18.95 from National Education Service. To order, call 800/733-6786, e-mail sales@nesonline.com, or visit www.nesonline.com.

Morrison's Telling Tale

Toni Morrison: *Telling a Tale Untold* examines the life and work of the first African-American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993. Author Jim Haskins dis-

cusses her happy childhood despite financial struggles, her college days at Howard University and Cornell, and the writer's workshop that gave rise to one of the most celebrated contemporary American writers. 144 pp. \$26.90 from Millbrook Press. To order, go to www.millbrookpress.com or call 800/462-4703.

Bug World

Written by Andy Dixon and illustrated by Nick Harris, *Bug World* creates a theme park that consists of six environments representing different regions of the world. A rival theme park sends out agents to sabotage the park with growth pods to make giant evil bugs, shutting down Bug



World. In the style of *Where's Waldo*, young readers look for specific items, bugs, and agents to save the park. 32 pp. \$10.47

from Big Fish. To order, go to www.amazon.com.

Board Book of Bones

In *Amazing Dinosaur Discovery* by Shaheen Bilgrami, Treve Tamblin, and Mike Phillips, children view animal skeleton diagrams and, with a pull of a tab, superimpose those bones over full-color illustrations of creatures. Readers of this board book visit a "museum," learn facts, and see the bone structures of blue



whales, boa constrictors, the T-Rex and more. 12 pp. \$9.95 each from Sterling Publishing. To order, go to www.sterlingpublishing.com or call 800/805-5489.

**Up, Up, and Away**

Young readers can learn how to make their own paper model planes while learning the sci-

entific basics of aeronautic crafts in Norman Schmidt's *Incredible Paper Flying Machines*. Children will also learn about the history of early dreamers like Leonardo da Vinci and others who pushed the limits of physics. \$19.95 from Sterling Publishing. To order, go to www.sterlingpublishing.com or call 800/805-5489.

All About Beaks

In the colorful and informative *Beaks!*, author Sneed B. Collard III stresses the importance of beaks to a bird's anatomy and introduces



young readers to different types of birds with different types of beaks. Take a peek at the "beak-ability" quiz once you've got it

down. \$6.95 from Charlesbridge Publishing. To order, go to www.charlesbridge.com or call 800/225-3214.

Examining Education Reform

President Bush, by signing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act last January, placed a greater emphasis on the implications of standardized testing. *Staying on Course in Education Reform*, from the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and author Paul E. Barton, reflects back on achievements and steps in the right direction, as well as the failures and incompleteness in education reform from the past few decades. \$10.50 from ETS. To order, call 609/734-5694 or go to www.ets.org/research/pic.



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The NEA Foundation gives over 300 grants a year to fund your BIG ideas. Our ongoing application process makes it easier than ever to get a grant. Apply today at www.nfie.org or call 202.822.7840. Small grants can lead to BIG change.

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NFIE1

in the Light Lane

Tiger Beats All

As my advanced ESL class scanned magazines during a free reading period, one student asked me when the Vietnam War took place. I told him.

I then told the class, "There's another war that took place just a few years before most of you were born. It was the Gulf War." "Who did we fight against in the Gulf War?" a student asked. "Iraq," I answered. Just then another student piped up, "You mean Tiger Woods whupped Iraq?"

Lina Valdez-Pena
Tucson, Arizona

I had my second graders finish some common proverbs. Some of their replies:

- A bird in the hand is worth a dollar in the bank.
- Don't bite the hand that's gross.
- It's always darkest before a fight.
- Children should be seen and played with.

■ Where there's smoke, there's a person.

■ Don't bite the hand that you write with.

■ You can lead a horse to water, but it will be scared.

■ Early to bed and early to rise makes a man tired.

Liz Wolf-Spada
Wrightwood, California

I'm a seventh-grade math teacher. It's amusing to see parents "show up" in the actions of their children. The other day, two of my students came up to my desk for help. While they were waiting their turn, one of the girls started to complain to her friend about something that wasn't going her way. Her friend placed her hands on her hips and said, "Would you like a little cheese with that whine?"

Joeleen Stanard
Wonder Lake, Illinois

During our fourth-grade social studies unit on U.S. government, I taught a lesson about our government's system of checks and balances. Unsure of whether the children grasped the concept, I tentatively called on a student who had his hand raised at the lesson's conclusion. "Mr. Koppel," he asked, "if each branch of government is so busy worrying about what the other two branches are doing, how are they going to get anything done?" After thinking about it for a moment, I responded, "Exactly!"

Charles Koppel
Cheshire, Connecticut



"Remarkable! You have the worry lines of a teacher half your age."

My journalism students must submit a beat, a written report that covers specific areas of the school, every two weeks. One of my budding Pulitzer Prize winners recently filed this report from the school nurse: "Many students are reporting to my office with headaches caused by allegories." Blame the English teachers! Surely the nurse will next be responding to maladies caused by metaphors and symptoms brought on by similes!

Tony Willis
Carmel, Indiana

On the first day of the new school year, I always share the benefits of my English class with the seventh graders. I tell them that they will become better writers, spellers, thinkers, and grammarians. Of course, we have to discuss what a grammarian is!

Just after the discussion, my principal appeared at the door to welcome students. Wanting to show off my pupils, I asked them to tell about the benefits of the class. "Better readers," one chirped; "better writers," replied another. One boy who obviously had not followed the discussion said, "And we'll be better barbarians, too!"

Mary Duncan
Erie, Pennsylvania

On his first day of kindergarten, our little grandson in California returned home and said, "I'm going to ask my teacher to come to my house, and I'm going to

tell her that every time she wants to talk, she has to raise her hand."

Lena Schornack
Aberdeen, South Dakota

Each year we have a book fair, and my kindergartners bring money in envelopes to buy books. We always ask parents to write "Book Fair" on the envelope so we know what the money is for. One year while we were having our lessons, a young girl waved her envelope, frantically trying to get my attention. I finally called on her and asked what she wanted. "Here's my money," she replied. Since there was nothing written on the envelope, I asked her what the money was for. "It's for the book fairy," she replied.

Dan Rodgers
La Mirada, California

Got Laughs?

- Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members?

You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane"

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Mr. Literal

A sixth-grade teacher in my school told me about a student in one of her classes who had recently taken a statewide math test. The directions on one of the problems asked pupils to prove their answer by making a table or chart. When the teacher looked at this child's work, he had dutifully drawn a table with four legs and a chart on top of it.

Lee Safian
Paterson, New Jersey

A couple of years ago, I took home the science folders to grade over the holidays. I plopped them down on the easy chair to work on them later. Unfortunately, my puppy found them and chewed up the top couple of folders. When we returned to school after the holidays, I told the two girls whose work was mangled that they had the best excuse going: "My teacher's dog ate my homework."

Guy Burleson
Port Arkansas, Texas

My second graders were making a chart of adjectives from A to Z. The class was doing great until we got stumped on the letter L. As I was trying to give clues for words like "lazy" and "lovely," a young student waved his hand wildly. His suggestion: "lactose intolerant." I smiled and said, "Now why didn't I think of that?"

Shannon McFarlane
Alton, Illinois

On NEA's Read Across America day, the aide who works with me began assisting a small group of first graders. She proudly wore the CTA (California Teachers Association) button we had given her to celebrate the day. As she sat down to get the kids started, one little boy pointed at her button and exclaimed, "Hey, they spelled CAT wrong."

Lauren Viscardi
Irvine, California

A little princess in my kindergarten class added enchantment to all my years since by giving my umbrella a new name. Her word? Rainbella.

Geraldine Pratt
Murray, Utah

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